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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

VOLUME 238 WASHINGTON, JUNE 25, 2008 NUMBER 4,838

Dream On

THE RACE FOR the Democratic presidential nomination may be over and Barack Obama may be its winner. But the Clinton family drama goes on. Early this week, as the final primaries took place and the mathematical reality of delegate counts became impossible to deny, Hillary Clinton let it be known that, yes, she'd consider accepting the vice-presidential nomination if Obama offered it to her. The statement gave instant political credibility to an idea already popular in some quarters. For many of Clinton's disappointed supporters, putting her on the ticket is a moral imperative: By virtue of her close second-place finish in delegates and popular votes, Clinton *earned* the vice presidential nomination. To more disinterested observers, choosing Clinton would represent a savvy strategic choice: During the primaries, her strongest support came primarily from those voters—the white working class and Latinos—with whom Obama has famously struggled. Putting Clinton on the ticket, according to this argument, solves that problem. It is, say proponents of the scheme, a true Dream Ticket.

JEFF HAYNES/REUTERS/LANDOV

Or maybe a nightmare. It is difficult to dispute that Clinton satisfies the first and most important criteria for serving as vice president: the ability to assume the presidency in a time of crisis. Clinton has extensive experience in public life, having worked in both the executive and legislative branches; she is highly intelligent; she has an unrivaled grasp of public policy; and she has a long track record indicating adherence to basic principles of the Democratic Party. The now-legendary mismanagement of her campaign certainly raises legitimate questions about her leadership skills. But, within the party, the ranks of people with equal resumés are small. As Obama himself stated many months ago, when speculation about a Clinton-Obama ticket first broke into the national press, any Democrat would have to put Clinton on his or her short list of possible vice-presidential nominees.

But the ability to assume power in a crisis is a necessary condition for serving as vice president, not a sufficient one. It has been about three-quarters of a century since John Nance Garner, who served as vice president under FDR, called the job a "warm bucket of piss." The modern archetypes for a vice president are Al Gore and Dick Cheney. Publicly, both men were highly visible advocates for their respective administrations; privately, each was among his administration's most trusted and influential advisers. And one key factor in each man's success was the close working relationship he developed with his boss—a relationship based on trust and mutual respect. Given the campaign Clinton has run, it's virtually impossible to imagine a similar relationship ever developing between her and Obama.

Some might suggest that, if Clinton can help Democrats capture the White House, nothing else matters. But it's hardly self-evident that her presence on the ticket would accomplish that. One of the great errors pundits keep making is to take primary or caucus results as indicators of how people will vote in November. Yes, Clinton has attracted more support from Latinos and white working-class voters than Obama. But that doesn't necessarily mean that, in a contest pitting Obama against John McCain, her presence on the ticket would pull these voters back toward the Democrats. For one thing, while some Clinton supporters—22 percent, if you believe the latest poll—presently say they'd choose McCain over Obama, many of them are likely to reconsider once the policy contrast of the general election comes into view. It's safe to assume that most Clinton backers care about preserving abortion rights, fighting climate change, pursuing universal health insurance, and ending the war in Iraq. If so, they won't vote for McCain. And as for those Clinton supporters who pick candidates based on personal preference, not policy? Well, some—especially those motivated, consciously or subconsciously, by race—might indeed vote for McCain over Obama. But there's no convincing evidence that they would change their minds and back Obama if only Clinton, too, were on the ticket. If anything, it's more likely that Clinton's addition to the ticket would cost Obama votes. All the focus on Obama in recent weeks has led to an odd case of collective amnesia, in which supposed strategic experts have forgotten that Clinton remains one of the most polarizing figures in American politics—creating, among other things, a potential fund-raising boost for Republicans.

Nor is that the end of the political complications Clinton's presence on the ticket would cause. One of Obama's best political assets right now is the message of change he carries—

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the sense that his election turns the page on not just the Bush era but the Clinton era, as well. But, if Hillary is Obama's running mate, it will be that much more difficult for him to speak of a new moment in American politics. More likely, he would find himself constantly discussing the familiar litany of Clinton distractions, many of them involving the financial and personal activities of Bill—a topic barely scratched during the primaries but sure to be revisited if the Republican attack machine gets its opportunity.

One senses that Obama understands this—which may be why he has shown little interest in tapping Clinton. But, if Clinton pursues the idea anyway, or even allows her supporters to do so, it will leave Obama with an uncomfortable choice: select Clinton as a running mate or spurn her publicly in a way that really would alienate voters. Then again, maybe Clinton herself will take care of the problem. Hours after her conference call hinting at a vice-presidential slot, Clinton appeared before her supporters in New York City and delivered a speech now famous—and infamous—for its defiance. That defiance, she insisted, was not because of ego: It was because she believed in the causes her campaign had championed and the people who had rallied around her. Given the tone of that speech, not to mention the sometimes-destructive campaign Clinton has run, it's difficult to take those claims of selflessness seriously. But there's one easy way for Clinton to show that she really means it: to take herself out of the running for the vice presidency, thus giving the Democrats their best shot at winning in November.

Fair Weather

THERE ARE certain streaks that have become etched in American lore: Joe DiMaggio's 56 straight games with a hit, UCLA's 88-game unbeaten run in men's basketball. Slightly less famous, but still impressive, is this feat: Between April 12 and May 24 of last year, John McCain missed 46 consecutive votes in the U.S. Senate. In fact, McCain missed more than half of all Senate votes last year, enough to disqualify him from the infamous *National Journal* rankings that purported to find Barack Obama the most liberal senator.

Now, we understand that McCain had elsewhere to be. We don't expect senators running for president to be around for every vote to name a post office or confirm a judge. Both Obama and Hillary Clinton missed their fair share of votes, though they managed to make it back to Capitol Hill more frequently than McCain did. But the business of legislating doesn't stop just because it's an election year, or at least it shouldn't. Senators do have an obligation to return from the campaign trail in order to cast votes on the major issues pending before Congress.

Which is why it's distressing that John McCain announced that he'd be skipping a vote on the Lieberman-Warner climate-change bill. McCain has long sought to portray himself as a rare breed of green Republican. But, as Bradford Plumer has written, McCain's rhetorical commitment to the environment hasn't been matched by an interest in the quotidian business of conducting negotiations and building coalitions in order to actually move important legislation ("Grand Canyon," March 12). McCain's decision to skip the vote on Lieberman-Warner only strengthens that conclusion.

Not to mention, McCain's position on the merits of the bill is somewhere between muddled and incoherent. A month ago, McCain told reporters he hoped it would pass; three weeks later, he abruptly changed course and announced his opposition, on the grounds that it doesn't offer sufficient aid to the nuclear-power industry.

This would be a bizarre stance for any politician to take. For someone who claims to support cap-and-trade and who has made a career out of taking morally righteous stands against special interests, it's downright absurd. And McCain apparently has no desire to come to Washington and offer an amendment to address his objections to the bill. Nor is this an isolated incident: Last month, McCain also opposed Virginia Senator Jim Webb's new G.I. Bill, a bipartisan measure to expand education benefits for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan—but he couldn't be bothered to either vote on it or try to amend it.

McCain points to his long Senate career as proof that he's qualified to serve as president. Problem is, McCain seems to view the Senate more as a bully pulpit than a legislative body. His career consists largely of embracing grand causes while devoting little attention to the pesky details of implementing them—of, you know, governing. ◆

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energy technology series

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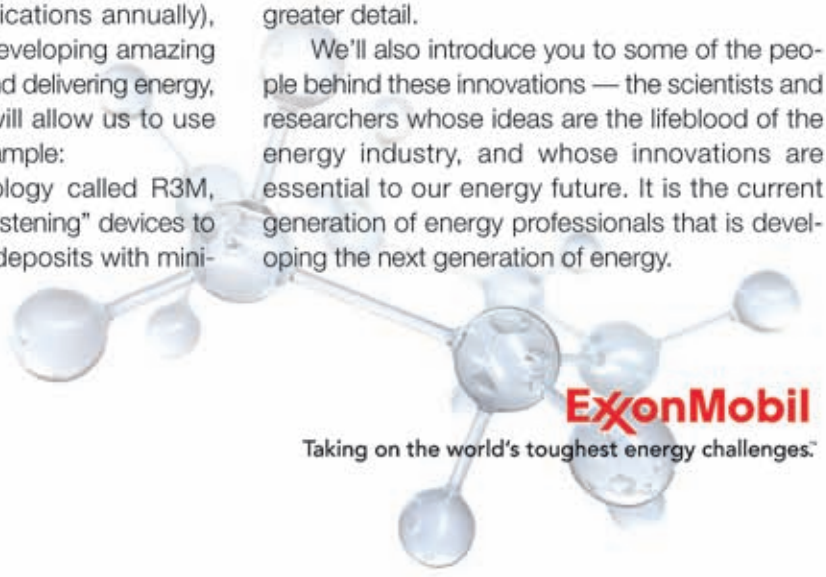

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Irregular Joe

The Zell Millerization of Joe Lieberman.

JONATHAN CHAIT

WATCHING Joe Lieberman go around the bend over the last couple years is one of the strangest things I've ever seen in politics. Lieberman was always a foreign policy hawk and a capital gains tax cutter, and he generally took enormous pleasure in staying in the right's good graces. But it is also these very qualities—his ideological moderation, his aversion to conflict, his timorous demeanor—that have made his recent apoplexy so weird.

Lieberman, naturally, sees things a bit differently. In a series of speeches, op-eds, and interviews, he has been making the case that he, Joe Lieberman, has resolutely stood behind his lifelong ideology while the entire rest of the Democratic Party has gone off the McGovernite cliff. In his telling, the party was hawkish from World War II through the early 1960s. Then it was taken over by left-wing isolationists who were "viscerally opposed to the use of military force." Under Bill Clinton and Al Gore, the party recovered its hawkish legacy, but, in the last few years, Democrats—presumably including Clinton and Gore themselves—have "resurrected the profoundly wrong and persistently unsuccessful McGovern-Carter worldview."

You might wonder precisely which ways McGovern's nefarious ideology is making itself felt. Lieberman says that Democrats, who were once "unafraid to make moral judgments about the world beyond our borders," now "minimize the seriousness of the threat from Islamic extremism." Lieberman prefers them to use morally confident language like this:

> The terrorists are at war with us. The threat is from violent extremists who are a small minority of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, but the threat is real. They distort Islam. They kill man, woman, and child; Christian and Hindu, Jew and Muslim. They seek to create a repressive caliphate. To defeat this enemy, we must understand who we are fighting against, and what we are fighting for.

Oh, wait—that passage was Barack Obama, speaking last summer. Lieberman further complains, "The top foreign policy priority of the Democratic Party has not been to expand the size of our military for the war on terror or to strengthen our democracy promotion efforts in the Middle East or to prevail in Afghanistan. It has been to pull our troops out of Iraq."

This is a really sneaky formulation. Lieberman is implying that Democrats oppose expanding the military, prevailing in Afghanistan, etc. Actually, they favor all those things. (Obama has proposed adding 92,000 new troops to the military.) Lieberman's statement is *literally* true—Democrats put a higher priority on Iraq than those other issues—but misleading. Just because something isn't your "top" foreign policy priority doesn't mean it isn't a high priority.

Yes, Democrats do favor a withdrawal from Iraq. They think the U.S. occupation is not helping to produce a stable government in Baghdad. This is certainly a debatable view, but it just isn't the same thing as lacking confidence in the virtues of American democracy or viscerally opposing the use of force. In Pakistan, the Democratic presidential candidate has advocated military strikes against Al Qaeda, while the GOP candidate has ridiculed such action as impractical. Imagine what Lieberman would say if it was the other way around.

Lieberman's history, which imagines a binary fight between hawks and isolationists, is woefully mistaken. In fact, during the cold war there were three camps: anti-interventionists on the left, liberal internationalists in the center, and hard-line anti-communists on the right. The left opposed the cold war. The center favored containment. The right deemed coexistence with communism unacceptable and advocated "rollback" of communism.

Lieberman's foreign policy views are in the tradition of the right, not the center. In the 1990s, he promoted "rogue state rollback," a neoconservative doctrine that's the direct lineal descendant of cold war rollback. Right-wing anti-communist hardliners opposed negotiations or arms control agreements with the enemy and, at various points, raged against Eisenhower, Nixon, and Reagan for their soft line.

My colleague J. Peter Scoblic's new book, *U.S. vs. Them*, opens with the story of conservatives in 1959 creating the "Committee Against Summit Entanglements" to express their horror that Eisenhower would sit down with Soviet premier Khrushchev. The Committee's logic was nearly identical to that which Lieberman now deploys against Obama for his willingness to meet with Iran's leadership. Lieberman tries to use this issue to show that Obama falls outside the mainstream tradition of U.S. foreign policy, but he winds up proving this about himself.

And, just as Lieberman casts himself as the sole surviving heir to the liberal internationalist tradition, he likewise presents himself as one of the few—or possibly the only—independent-minded souls remaining in a party now controlled by rabid partisan bloggers. "Instead of challenging their opinions," says Lieberman with characteristic disappointment, "far too many Democratic leaders have kowtowed to them." In a previous speech, he urged an audience of international-studies graduates to remain independent like him. It may hurt your popularity, he explained, but, "far more important, you will not lose your convictions about what you believe is best for the security of our great country."

There's hardly any sense in which Lieberman is an independent figure. He's become a cog in the Republican message machine. He may be independent from liberal bloggers, but the conservative equivalent—partisan shouters like Sean Hannity—are his treasured pals. Lieberman even continues to embrace lunatic preacher John Hagee—whose many daft ideas include his belief that the Holocaust fulfilled God's will—even after John McCain repudiated him.

Lieberman explains that he calls himself an "independent Democrat" because the Democratic Party's foreign policy ideals "exist in me today independent of the current Democratic Party, which has rejected them." This is a wildly egocentric interpretation. Democrats started questioning the war because the war was going badly, while Lieberman remained—to borrow a phrase—in a spider hole of denial. Most supported him in his 2006 primary fight but then endorsed the party nominee when he lost, because that's what political parties do.

Lieberman seems to think Democrats lost faith in America. No, Joe, just in you. ◆

TRB
From Washington

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Noe Santos-Dilone, U.S. Army, Iraq
Photo by Jason Germeroth

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Mr. Right?

The rise of the Obamacons.

THE *NEW YORKER* is hardly the optimal vehicle for reaching the conservative intelligentsia. But, last year, Barack Obama cooperated with a profile for that magazine where he seemed to be speaking directly to the right. Because he paid obeisance to the virtues of stability and continuity, his interlocutor, Larissa MacFarquhar, came away with the impression that the Illinois senator was an adherent of Edmund Burke: "In his view of history, in his respect for tradition, in his skepticism that the world can be changed any way but very, very slowly, Obama is deeply conservative."

As *The New Yorker*'s assessment shot across blogs, many conservatives listened eagerly. A broad swath of the movement has been in open revolt against George W. Bush—and the Republican Party establishment—for some time. They don't much care for the Iraq war or the federal government's vast expansion over the last seven-and-a-half years. And, in the eyes of these discontents, the nomination of John McCain only confirmed the continuation of the worst of the Bush-era deviations from first principles.

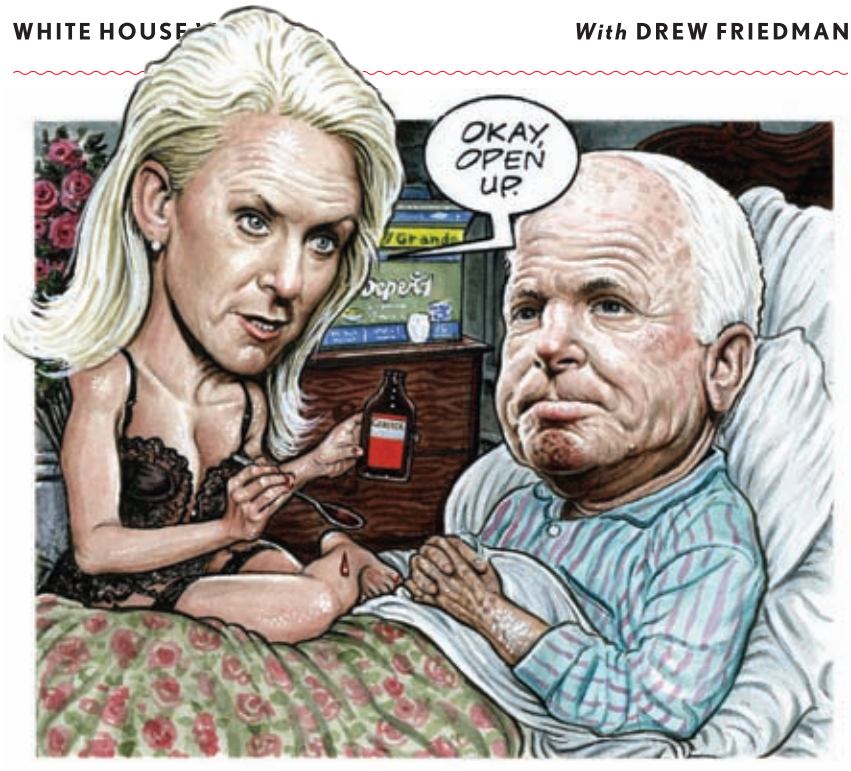
But it was hardly inevitable that this revolt would translate into enthusiasm for the Democratic standard-bearer. After all, you could see similar signs of unhappiness four years ago, and none of that translated into mass defections to the John Kerry camp. And, despite Ann Coulter's vow to campaign for Hillary Clinton over John McCain, the old bête noir of the right would have never attracted many conservatives. That's what makes the rise of the Obamacons such an interesting development. Conservatives of almost all ideological flavors (even, gasp, some supply-siders) have been drawn to Obama—out of a genuine affection and a belief that he may actually better embody movement ideals than McCain.

There have been a few celebrated cases of conservatives endorsing Obama, like the blogger Andrew Sullivan and the legal scholar Douglas Kmiec. But you probably have not have heard of many of the Obamacons—and neither has the Obama campaign. When I checked with it to ask for a list of prominent conservative supporters, the campaign seemed genuinely unaware that such supporters even existed. But those of us on the right who pay attention to think tanks, blogs, and little magazines have watched Obama compile a coterie drawn from the movement's most stalwart and impressive thinkers. It's a group that will no doubt grow even larger in the coming months.

THE LARGEST GROUP of Obamacons hail from the libertarian wing of the movement. And it's not just Andrew Sullivan. Milton and Rose Friedman's son, David, is signed up with the cause on the grounds that he sees Obama as the better vessel for his father's cause. Friedman is convinced of Obama's sympathy for school vouchers—a tendency that the Democratic primaries temporarily suppressed. Scott Flanders, the CEO of Freedom Communications—the company that owns *The Orange County Register*—told a company meeting that he believes Obama will accomplish the paramount libertarian goals of withdrawing from Iraq and scaling back the Patriot Act.

Libertarians (and other varieties of Obamacons, for that matter) frequently find themselves attracted to Obama on stylistic grounds. That is, they believe that he has surrounded himself with pragmatists, some of whom (significantly) come

WHITE HOUSE [illegible] *With* DREW FRIEDMAN



Geritol makes Johnny Boy sleepy.

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from the University of Chicago. As the blogger Megan McArdle has written, "His goal is not more government so that we can all be caught up in some giant, expressive exercise of collectively enforcing our collective will on all the other people standing around us in the collective; his goal is improving transparency and minimizing government intrusion while rectifying specific outcomes."

In nearly every quarter of the movement, you can find conservatives irate over the Iraq war—a war they believe transgresses core principles. And it's this frustration with the war—and McCain's pronouncements about victory at any cost—that has led many conservatives into Obama's arms. Francis Fukuyama, the neoconservative theorist, recently told an Australian journalist that he would reluctantly vote for Obama to hold the Republican Party accountable "for a big policy failure" in Iraq. And he seems to view Obama as the best means for preserving American power, since Obama "symbolizes the ability of the United States to renew itself in a very unexpected way."

You can find similar sentiments coursing through the Boston University professor Andrew Bacevich's seminal Obamacon manifesto in *The American Conservative*. He believes that the war in Iraq has undermined the possibilities for conservative reform at home. The prospects for a conservative revival, therefore, depend on withdrawing from Iraq. Thus the necessity of Obama. "For conservatives, Obama represents a sliver of hope. McCain represents none at all. The choice turns out to be an easy one," Bacevich concludes.

How substantial is the Obamacon phenomenon? Well, it has even penetrated *National Review*, the intellectual anchor of the conservative movement. There's Jeffrey Hart, who has been a senior editor at the magazine since 1968 and even wrote a history of the magazine, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind*; and Wick Allison, who once served as the magazine's publisher.

Neither man has renounced his conservatism. Both have come away impressed by Obama's rhetorical acumen. This is a particular compliment coming from Hart, who wrote speeches for both Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. They both like that Obama couches his speeches in a language of uplift and unity. When describing his support for Obama, Allison pointed me in the direction of a column that his wife (who has never supported a Democrat) wrote in *The Dallas Morning News*: "He speaks with candor and elegance against the kind of politics that have become so dispiriting and for the kind of America I would like to see. As a man, I find Mr. Obama to be prudent, thoughtful, and courageous. His life story embodies the conservative values that go to the core of my beliefs."

But, if you're looking for the least likely pool of Obamacons, it would be the supply-siders. And you can even find some of those. Take Larry Hunter, who helped put together the economics passages in the Contract with America and served as chief economist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He concedes that Obama is saying the wrong things on taxes but dismisses it as electioneering. Of far greater importance, in Hunter's view, is that Obama has the potential to "scramble the political deck, break up old alliances, and bring odd bedfellows together in a new coalition." And, what's more important, he views the Republican Party as a "dead, rotting carcass with a few decrepit old leaders stumbling around like zombies in a horror version of *Weekend at Bernie's*, handcuffed to a corpse." Unless the Republican Party is thoroughly purged of its current leadership, Hunter fears that it "will pollute the political environment to toxic levels and create an epidemic that could damage the country for generations to come."

I know what Hunter and the rest of the Obamacons are talking about. As a conservative, I share their disgust with a Republican Party that still does not see how badly George W. Bush has misgoverned this country. But, while I am sympathetic to the Obamacons and have a number of friends that are, I am not one of them. I'm not ready to join the other side.

Still, I have enjoyed watching the phenomenon, which has the potential to remake the political landscape. It will also produce some of the good comedy that inevitably accompanies strange bedfellows. The blogger Dorothy King, an archeologist and strong conservative, recently outed herself as an Obamacon. This was a culturally awkward position for her. She wondered, "Do I now, as a newly minted Obamaphile liberal elitist, have to serve my guests Chablis? Or would any old chardonnay do? … Am I even meant to admit to going to the supermarket? Should I pretend to only go to the local Farmers' Market?" There, undoubtedly, will be much more of such dislocation in the months to come.

Bruce Bartlett

Bruce Bartlett is the author of Imposter: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy.

Pacific Division

Meet the new Asian elite.

The winter meetings in Davos, Switzerland—where Bono ruminates on panels about the great issues of the day with the likes of Bill Gates and Angela Merkel—are at the heart of nearly every current conspiracy theory about the global elite. But, even if you don't buy those wild narratives—and believe that the confab is really just an over-programmed business boondoggle with a tony guest list (which happens to be the truth)—you would still have to concede that the gathering has, for the last several decades, played a pretty influential role in setting the conventional wisdom of the global elite. So why, then, are the folks who plan Davos such an anxious bunch these days?

Their growing problem is that, for a meeting dubbed the "World Economic Forum" (WEF), Davos isn't nearly cosmopolitan enough. The action in the global economy is shifting East, toward China and India. In my recent study of global elites, of the 6,000 or so people who make up the top of the world's power pyramid—loosely defined as the people who can influence the lives of millions across borders on a regular basis—about one-third were from Asia, and that number is increasing on an almost daily basis. But, despite tectonic shifts in world markets and politics, Asian attendance at Davos remains disproportionately low.

So how should the European elites respond to the rise of Asia? Will they be able to assimilate the business and political leaders of these new powers into organizations like the WEF, where trans-Atlantic values dominate? Or will the old Davos crowd find itself increasingly forced to accept new settings, new rules, and a new kind of conventional wisdom deeply influenced by Asian players with Asian values?

Even to global elites accustomed to impressive figures—on the bottom line, in their bank accounts, in the universes over which they have influence—Asia has become the home of real data-bombs. For example:

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That's what we stand for.

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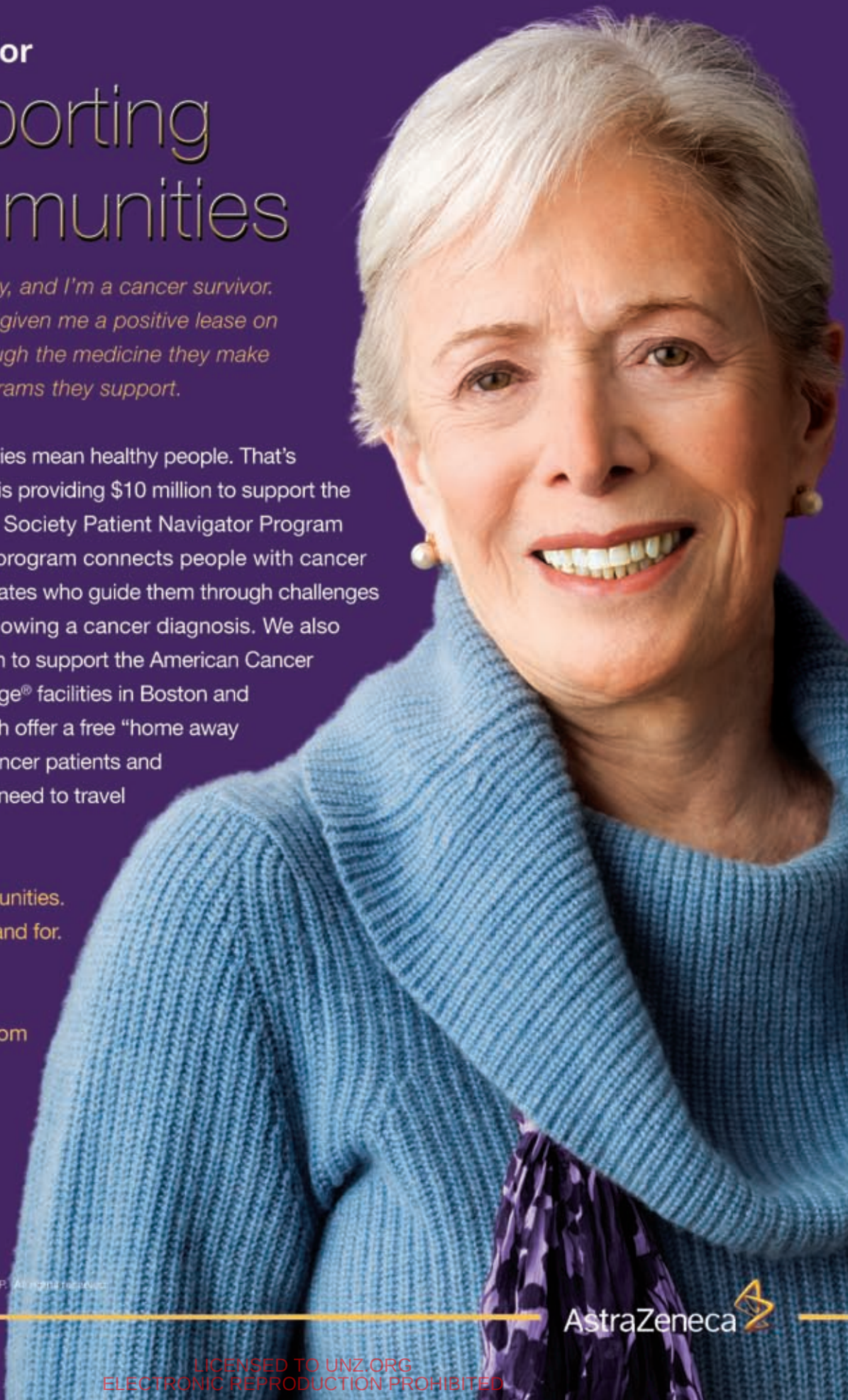

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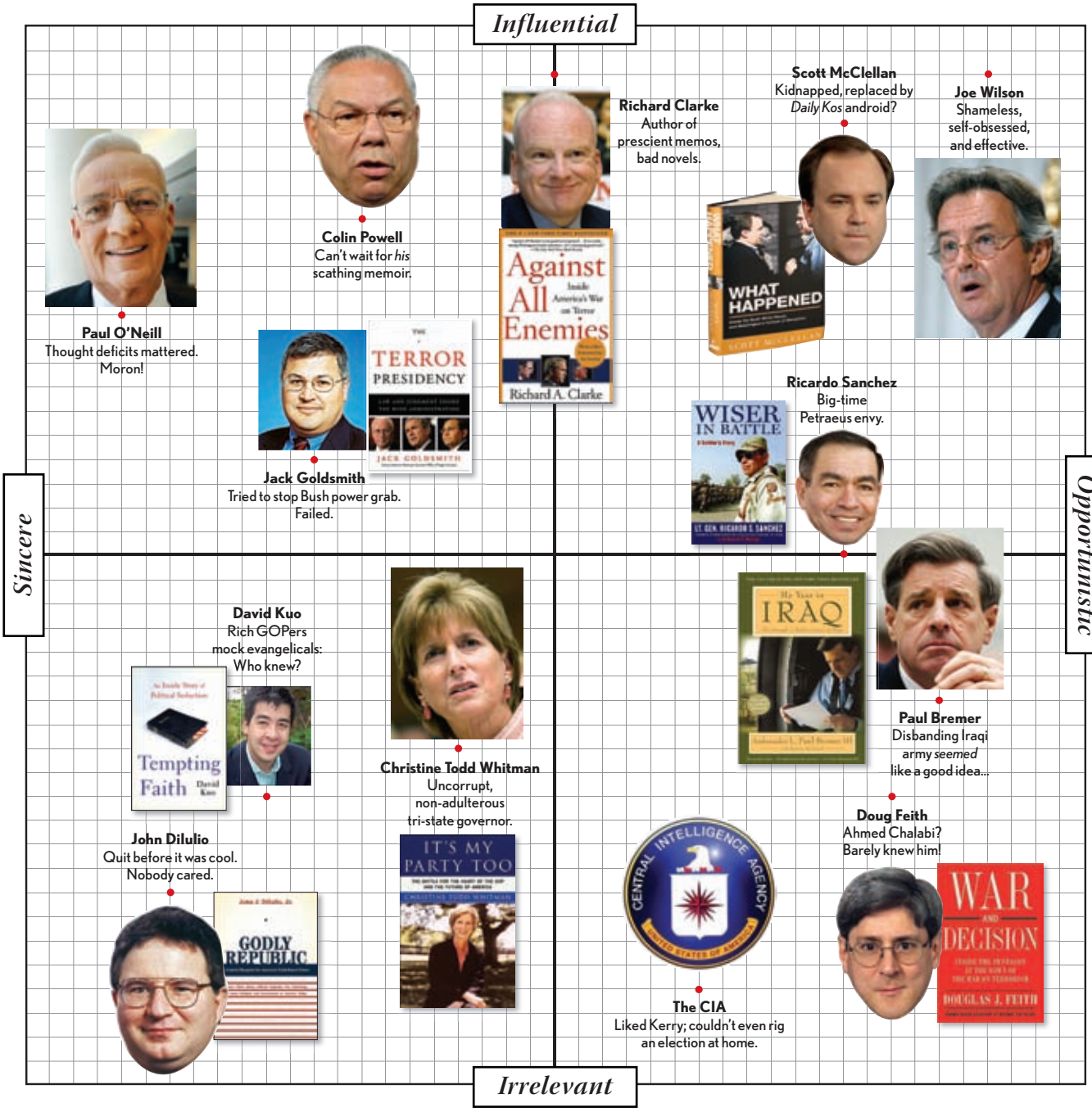
According to one local count, the number of Chinese billionaires grew from 15 to more than 100 between 2006 and 2007. On the Forbes list of billionaires, four of the top ten are Indian. Of the world's 500 largest companies, roughly one-quarter are Asian. Most of the billion-dollar-plus companies rising out of the emerging world can be found in Asia. China would need to build the equivalent of a 1.5-million-person city every month for the next 20 years to accommodate its urban growth. The most engineers, the most consumers, the greatest wealth creation—it's mind-numbing, and it's undeniably game-changing for global society on every level.

You could see how the Western elites who populate places like Davos might assume, or at least hope, that these newcomers will naturally join their ranks—learning English, for one, but also picking up the unspoken rules and conventions of Western business. But such an outlook assumes, with great self-satisfaction, that the past will be the primary shaper of the future—and, of course, that assumption is proving to be wrong. Quite the contrary: It seems increasingly likely that the lure of Asia's rapidly expanding markets will result in a greater number of Westerners adapting to Asia's growing influence, rather than vice versa.

THE BUSH APOSTATE MATRIX ***By* JOSH PATASHNIK**



ROGER L. WOLLENBERG/UPI/LANDOV (POWELL, MCCLELLAN, WILSON); PAUL GOGUEN/BLOOMBERG NEWS/LANDOV (O'NEILL); FRANK RUMPENHORST/DPA/LANDOV (CLARKE); DOMINIC BRACCOII/UPI/LANDOV (WHITMAN); JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS/LANDOV (BREMER); ZUMA WIRE WORLD PHOTOS/NEWSCOM (SANCHEZ)

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China is already exhibiting its influence through a global quest for resources, gaining leverage in Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere through a massive appetite for raw materials and an ability to lend or invest using its almost $1.5 trillion in reserves. China's $200 billion sovereign wealth fund, CIC, recently demonstrated this clout with multibillion-dollar investments in Blackstone Group and Morgan Stanley. Singapore, through its two sovereign wealth investment arms, Temasek and GIC, is making analogous investments abroad, as is South Korea.

Asian involvement tends to have a particular character, distinct from that of the West. China's dealings worldwide, as evidenced by its oil transactions with Sudan and other African countries, tend to be conducted primarily on the merits of the transaction at hand, without the political baggage that often weighs down U.S. commerce with emerging nations. Reflecting the country's desire to have its internal affairs left alone, China has not to date exerted much pressure on trading or investment partners to address problems at home, problems that Westerners might find untenable. (There are a couple of exceptions, as when China pressures countries that seek its investments to avoid acknowledging or encouraging the government in Taiwan.) China's unwillingness to explicitly tie its purchases of U.S. federal debt to a political agenda is perhaps the most important example of this in geopolitical and geoeconomic terms: The silence speaks volumes both in terms of what it means and in terms of what a change of policy might mean in the future.

While the United States and Europe have surely gone too far in attempting to influence other countries, often in strikingly hypocritical and inconsistent ways (colonialism comes to mind, as do recent attempts to unilaterally impose American will), a more value-neutral tack, as illustrated by the Chinese, is problematic as well. There is, after all, right and wrong in the world, and it is the responsibility of members of the global community to identify and eliminate the wrong when it poses a threat to peace and stability. While it is clearly true that Western jawboning on Darfur has been inadequate, what would be the consequence were the court of high-level international opinion to become more influenced by, for example, Chinese views on the subject? This would imply a shift from jawboning to the even more inexcusable combination of remaining silent and profiting from trade with a callous regime. And Darfur is but a single example. From Chinese equivocation on the Iranian nuclear program to much of Asia's silent tolerance of Burma's brutal and, recently, almost unimaginably insensitive regime, we have seen the consequences of this approach.

Other values could change, too, if Asian trading culture expands its influence further. Since many of the fast-growing groups within the superclass hail from the cowboy economies of the emerging world, corruption could (and, indeed, has) become more tolerated. A less aggressive approach to global warming could be adopted, given the unwillingness of emerging economies to pay for costly technologies and higher environmental standards. As with foreign policy, the West's "do as I say, not as I do (or have done)" attitude could prove counterproductive as it tries to convince restive powers to follow global-warming protocols. And, in any case, it has become crystal clear to Western policymakers that, on issues like global warming, "coalitions of the willing" simply won't work. Leaders in rapidly developing nations like India and China hold vital cards: The decisions they make regarding fuel choices, exploration of alternatives, conservation, urbanization patterns, mileage standards, and other issues will determine, in many respects, whether headway can actually be made.

The raps against places like Davos are familiar—they are undemocratic; they are filled with self-important gasbags. But the problems of the next century—from nuclear proliferation to global warming, from migration to regulating international markets—are of an unprecedented global character and, like it or not, can't be solved without leaders from both East and West working together. The WEF is scrambling to stay relevant in the new climate, first by expanding operations in Asia to include an event in China called the "Annual Meeting of the New Champions" that brought emerging company leaders from around the world together in the industrial capital of Dalian. In addition, the Forum opened an office in Beijing, and it has sought to build ties with the Chinese government and other leaders elsewhere in the region. But it is far from certain that the WEF will be able to keep up. Soon enough, it appears, Lake Geneva's mandarins may no longer be hosts at the world's best party but merely aspiring guests, hoping that their successors are more welcoming—and more sensitive to their needs and interests—than they were to them.

David Rothkopf

David Rothkopf is the author of Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They are Making *and a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.*

Stephen Savage

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- member report #1456
- member report #12342
"He's a cat hater."
- member report #11222
"Don't expect him to negotiate."
- member report #3462
"No pressure. Just honest and professional."
- member report #4160
"...the price was excellent given the detail involved..."
- member report #11454
"It's a shame we only see him when something breaks."
- member report #8165
"These employees love what they do and it shows."
- member report #6942
"Their mothers would be very proud."
- member report #13456
"We kicked them out before something else happened."
- member report #3425
"I wish every home project would go this smoothly."
- member report #2319
"Absolutely outstanding."
- member report #2011
"They never showed up and never called..."
- member report #8765
"Received an apology from the owner and gift certificate to dinner."
- member report #8356
"What a mess!"
- member report #1737
"...clean shaven and most professional looking..."
- member report #2737
"Went to small claims court – we won."
- member report #1099
"...they were Johnny on the spot..."
- member report #7477
"I can't believe how great it looks and how inexpensive it was."
- member report #9273
"They did it in just a couple of days."
- member report #13772
"They will help you lift things out of your car and so on."
- member report #12222
"...not the electrician to call if you have pets."
- member report #1313
"I had to hire someone else to redo half the job."
- member report #10232
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"My wife wanted him to stay for dinner."
- member report #17852
"Made me feel like I was their only client."
- member report #9832
"They were here two hours and charged me $840."
- member report #9323
"...make sure you ask for the discount..."
- member report #11357
"We waited almost two weeks for our appointment."
- member report #6783
"He treated my house like it was his own!"
- member report #4592
"A first
"The workers
"They were friendly,
"...destroyed part of my lawn
"He understood
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The TNR Veeptacular

In search of a sidekick.

Mad Skills

The upside of Jim Webb's anger.

1789
John Adams, the nation's first vice president, thinking the title "President" too plebian, proposes "His Highness" and "His Mightiness" as alternates; he drops the argument when a senator suggests "His Rotundity" as a more refined alternative to "Vice President."

1793
In a letter to his wife, Adams complains, "My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived."

In the spring of 2006, Jim Webb was not yet a rising superstar. In fact, he was late getting started and low on cash in his effort to win the Virginia Democratic primary, so an admiring Roanoke circuit clerk named Steve McGraw took pity on him and agreed to put him up when he came to southwestern Virginia to campaign. Webb quickly established himself as the model houseguest, washing everybody's chili bowls and shooting pool with McGraw over a bottle of Maker's Mark bourbon. But a worry gnawed at McGraw: The rumor about Webb was that behind the noble-war-hero facade lay a man who harbored a volatile, prideful, and possibly unmanageable anger. "I kept looking for it," confides McGraw. "He started late, with no money. He told me that during the campaign he was sleeping about four hours a night for five months, and he said, 'I just can't turn my brain off.' . . . I kept saying, 'Sooner or later, something's gonna happen.' "

McGraw isn't the only person who's kept vigil waiting for Jim Webb to blow. Webb the hair-triggered hothead has become something of a legend here in Washington. Reporters pepper their Webb stories with colorful adjectives like "irascible" and "enraged," and, throughout town, he's often whispered of as though he were a mysterious specimen from a foreign and bellicose tribe. As evidence of Webb's hot streak, Washington social anthropologists point out that he switched party loyalties; that he's fond of hyperbole (he once called the Naval Academy a "horny woman's dream"); that he angrily quit his post as Reagan's Navy secretary; that he snapped at President Bush for asking after his soldier son Jimmy at a November 2006 White House party; and that his legislative aide tried to bring his loaded gun into the Capitol last spring, prompting Webb to explain cryptically that it was important "for a lot of people in the situation that I am in to be able to defend myself and my family." (What "situation"? Does he shoot his political enemies?)

The interesting thing about the angry-Webb mythology, though, is that it fascinates just as much as it frightens. Fellow Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill adoringly described Webb as a "street brawler," capturing the way some Democrats—call them the Jim Webb Orientalists—romanticize Webb's aggressive, exotically redneck roots and, by extension, his capacity to hormonally invigorate a party sick of its effete, wine-sipping image. Why promote aristocratic Democrats like Al Gore or John Kerry when there's Webb, who hangs out not with actresses or New York bankers but with the likes of his friend "Mac" McGarvey, a rough-hewn, ex-Marine honky-tonk manager with a nipple ring and only one arm?

And the specific trajectory of Webb's political anger—he's a former Republican now raging against a "Republican Party that continually seeks to politicize military service" and CEOs "openly consumed by self-justifying greed"—is powerfully appealing, too. He embodies the liberal fantasy laid out by Thomas Frank in *What's the Matter With Kansas?*: that blue-collar whites will stop being mad at liberals for frowning at their guns and start being mad at conservatives for raping their pocketbooks. His emotional journey is the same one liberals want lower-class whites to undergo en masse.

For these reasons, Jim Webb's anger would seem to make him an especially powerful vice-presidential choice for the refined and white-working-class-alienating Barack Obama. But the researchers vetting Obama's shortlist must be vexed by a question: Is Jim Webb a vessel for the kind of righteous indignation the Democrats need—or is he just too angry to be vice president?

Webb was an author before he was a senator; and, more than anything else—more than his conduct as Navy secretary or the occasional heated quote—his literary oeuvre is probably the source of his hotheaded reputation. Consider the Scots-Irish heritage—"whose blood still courses in [his] veins"—that Webb traces in his pop-history book *Born Fighting*. The modern-day Scots-Irish now living in Appalachia and the American South are, he explains, cut from the same mold as the "large-limbed, tattooed, red-haired madmen" of medieval Scotland who struck fear into the hearts of the more genteel Romans. These tribes were fiercely suspicious of authority, and their signature unwillingness to kiss anybody else's ass persisted through generations of depressing migrations and poverty. Their hero was William Wallace, who "learned early to hate—and to fight—the local English authorities." In the sixteenth century, writes Webb, the Scots-Irish could be found taking part in "unending blood feuds" in Scotland; by the seventeenth century, they were writing "no surrender" in their own blood during the siege of Londonderry in Ireland; by the eighteenth, they had become "daring moonshine runners" in the colonies; in the nineteenth, they were peopling the

ALL V.P. BUSTS: U.S. SENATE COLLECTION; JIM WEBB: PATRICK D. MCDERMOTT/UPI/LANDOV

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"frequently impatient, always outnumbered . . . wildly and recklessly Celtic" Confederate army against the "plodding" Union force; and, by the twentieth, they were mounting KKK rallies out of "bitterness at being dominated."

Webb obviously finds this sort of wild, brawling nature seductive. At times, *Born Fighting* describes the Scots-Irish fighting spirit with almost pornographic delight: These men were "bellicose and often warlike," "unapologetically, even devilishly hedonistic," "often impossible to control," men of "infinite stubbornness" who "dressed provocatively, acted with a volatile belligerence, drank to excess," and "came to accept the fight as birthright, even as some kind of proof of life." Their modern heirs were people like Webb's father's friend Bud, whom Webb worshipped as a child and who once punched somebody so hard his eyeball fell out when he sneezed.

How much of himself does Webb see in this? "A lot of it," he told me last month in his office, which is decorated with portraits of haunted-eyed Appalachians. "The culture formed me, and the military accentuated that." It's not hard to see why Washington's ruling class feared that Webb would be a little too keen on bringing Bud's m.o. to the Senate.

Last summer, Webb's fellow senator from Virginia, John Warner, put these fears to the test by taunting Webb with a once-in-a-lifetime political betrayal. For months, Webb had been working tirelessly on an amendment to cap the length of soldiers' tours in Iraq, and Warner had promised him crucial support. But, just hours before the scheduled vote on September 19, Warner backed out. "I endorsed it," he proclaimed melodramatically on the Senate floor. "I intend now to cast a vote against it." Standing nearby, Webb looked like he'd been slugged in the face.

Warner's bombshell, which doomed Webb's amendment, was enough to send the phlegmatic Harry Reid into spasms of bitter complaints; and the stunned scribes gathered in the press gallery could only wonder what kind of fury it would provoke from Webb. After all, if William Wallace had been jilted like that, he probably would have stabbed the offender on the spot. We all ran down to the post-vote press conference to witness the fireworks.

But then came the surprise: There were none. In fact, in defeat, Webb was less William Wallace than Oprah Winfrey. "I think Senator Warner probably struggled with this right down to the wire," he said empathetically, gently adding that he had "great respect" for the treasonous Virginia Republican. The *Chicago Tribune*'s Jill Zuckman captured the press's bewilderment. "After the vote, Webb seemed sorrowful rather than angry," she wrote.

It wasn't an isolated moment. In fact, Webb's behavior since reentering politics suggests that, while he might admire the bellicose personality type, his own temperament just isn't as hot as advertised. A friend, the author Bob Timberg, recalls that the first time he thought Webb had a chance to win the Senate race was when he watched him on "The Colbert Report." "I thought he might kill [Colbert]," Timberg admits. "And he was just fine!" Steve McGraw, the man who hosted Webb during the 2006 campaign, reports that the explosion he was waiting for never came; in fact, he found Webb had an "extremely good sense of humor." And, more recently, Webb's work on the G.I. Bill has been a model of negotiating patience and discipline. He reached out to vets' groups like the American Legion to build grassroots support. He gave up some of his own demands to bring skittish GOPers (like Warner) on board. And he waited. By the time it came to a vote last month, there was such momentum in favor of the bill that 25 Republicans jumped on, humiliating John McCain, who'd tried to stop it. The rumors of Webb's difficult nature, a once-skeptical Democratic aide raves, are "all blown out of proportion. . . . There are no surprises with him."

These days, Warner practically falls all over himself with praise for Webb's comity. "During a vote, on several occasions he's turned to me and said, 'Which vote do you think is in the best interest of the country?' " Warner says, sounding proud that Webb takes his advice. "You couldn't really want anything more from a working partner."

Webb has even repaired relations, or tried to, with Bush. When his son came home from Iraq, Webb decided to at least pretend that the president had evinced a good-faith curiosity in the boy and trooped him down to the White House to take a picture in the Oval Office. Jimmy, in his dress blues, looks vaguely irritated to be in the president's presence, but Senator Webb is smiling.

When it comes to anger, then, Jim Webb is more theorist than practitioner. He believes in anger, appreciates its role in history, even glorifies it—which is not the same as actually *being* angry.

Webb came to believe in anger not during his childhood, nor at war, but at Georgetown Law School. Landing there in the early '70s after Vietnam, he found himself thrust into a den of upper-crust snobs who relentlessly mocked the soldiers who had served with him. He describes the type in his novel *A Country Such as This*:

> The students, the people of books and pep clubs and prom committees, who had from their childhood feared the simple power and brutality of the blue collar kids, the red-necks, the bowling alley kings, the hot-rodding, ducktailed greasers who once mocked their studies and their lack of manliness . . . [now] unloaded on the soldiers, cursing them, daring them, under the accepted guise of hating Army, Pentagon and War.

The "people of books" at Georgetown taunted Webb, who was actually something of a natural intellectual (he likes T.S. Eliot and Impressionist art), for being a "WASP" and a dumb soldier. For the first time in his life, Webb started to feel like he was different. With a curiosity born of alienation, he ducked into the Library of Congress and started to read about his Scots-Irish roots, wolfing down six books on ethnic migration in five days. Through his reading, he came to understand his experience at Georgetown as part of a long struggle waged by his warlike people against cultural elites. "[N]o other group [than the white working class] has been so denigrated, attacked, and even feared by America's ever more interconnected ruling elites," he writes in *Born Fighting*. "Had I not gone to law school, I never

1804
Vice President Aaron Burr kills former Treasury secretary Alexander Hamilton in a duel. Burr is later charged with treason for trying to appoint himself emperor of a new nation that includes Louisiana and Mexico.

1832
Andrew Jackson threatens to hang his vice president, John C. Calhoun, over Calhoun's support of a Southern tariff revolt. Calhoun soon resigns. Near the end of his life, Jackson says his greatest regret as president is not following through on his threat.

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1839
Heavily indebted Vice President Richard Mentor Johnson, while still in office, opens and manages a hotel and tavern in Kentucky, where he is found by one visitor to be "giving his personal superintendence to the chicken and egg purchasing and water-melon selling department."

1841
John Tyler becomes the first vice president to accede to the presidency after the death of a president, in this case William Henry Harrison. Except for Secretary of State Daniel Webster, the entire cabinet resigns.

would have fully comprehended … the ingrained condescension of the nation's elites towards my culture."

By the end of his time at Georgetown, he had come to believe in the legitimacy of white anger in America—anger, after all, was the age-old Scots-Irish response to being treated unjustly. He explains to me that he and his people had ample reason to "turn around and [tell the Democrats], 'You guys don't respect us, you don't want us around,'" since the party's class-based condescension led it not only to mistreat Vietnam vets but to turn affirmative action into a perverse system of discrimination against poor whites and to blow the Navy's Tailhook sex-abuse scandal into a "witch hunt" against fighting men.

This is still Webb's narrative. Only now, the elites he mistrusts—the objects of his righteous anger—are less likely to be Democrats than big-business-loving Republicans. "What did these people do to earn these fabulous sums?" he writes of wealthy CEOs in his new book, *A Time to Fight*. "Did they invent the lightbulb? Did they discover the Internet?" And now it's Republicans who insult the soldiers, with their "patronizing litanies [to] shield themselves from accountability by claiming that criticism of the Bush Administration's policies undermines the troops." Lower-class whites, he believes, have every right to be as angry at Republicans after Bush as they were at Democrats after Johnson. "He was right," Webb tells me of Barack Obama's infamous comment that rural whites are "bitter." "They're *mad*."

Webb is supposed to be Obama's opposite: the angry white politician to Obama's mild-mannered black one. But, oddly, Webb has something fundamental in common with Obama. Both men felt ill at ease at elite schools, leading them to embark on quests to rediscover their ethnic identities in their twenties. Both deepened these discoveries through writing. And both came to their identities as outsiders—as admiring anthropologists of the identity rather than people for whom the identity was organic from birth. This explains why Webb can celebrate anger without succumbing to it. It also helps explain his appeal to Democrats. Like Obama, he is not simply a member of a group historically important to the party; he is someone who embodies that group, someone who has turned that group's narrative into his own. Webb—who, in our interview, defended Obama against charges of cultural elitism made by people "trying to cut Barack down"—has shown appreciation for the similarity between their projects. "If [the Scots-Irish] could get at the same table as black America, you could change populist American politics," he told Joe Scarborough last month, "because they have so much in common in terms of what they need out of government."

Thanks to their analogous symbolic roles, Webb and Obama have one more politically important and bizarre similarity: They appeal to the same voters, wine-track Democrats who come out in unprecedented droves to vote for a black man or a hillbilly white because they want their party to be bigger than themselves. While you'd expect Webb to attract poor, rural beer-trackers, in his 2006 Senate race he didn't do any better than the previous Democratic candidate had among Appalachian voters in southwestern Virginia; instead, he was propelled to victory by Northern Virginia suburbanites—Obama's base.

In the end, if Obama picks Webb to be his running mate, it will probably be more on the basis of their affinity than on Webb's power to win white votes—or Webb's capacity to balance Obama's laid-back vibe with some pugnaciousness. It will be a unity-loving, proud-to-be-black man acknowledging just how much he has in common with an anger-loving, proud-to-be-white one.

Eve Fairbanks

The Mouth

Ed Rendell's charm offensive.

Roughly a decade ago, when Ed Rendell was the mayor of Philadelphia, he made a controversial decision to appear with Nation of Islam minister Louis Farrakhan at a rally. Farrakhan was in town in the aftermath of an assault by a gang of whites on an African American woman and her son and nephew in a notoriously gritty and racist part of the city. Many politicians, especially Jewish ones, would have kept far away from the incendiary Farrakhan. Portions of Rendell's liberal base were outraged. Protesters marched outside his home. But he went ahead anyway.

I was writing a book on Rendell at the time. Allowed into his inner sanctum for close to six years, I found Rendell's stance on Farrakhan important and was eager to hear what he had been thinking during the rally. He did not disappoint: "As I sat there, I said to myself, 'Wouldn't it be great if someone burst in and gunned me down, because then Buzz would at least have an ending to his book.'"

It was pure Rendell—unabashed, predictably unpredictable, the opposite of self-serious.

There are a number of conventional reasons for Barack Obama to consider Rendell, who is now serving his second term as governor of Pennsylvania, as his running mate this fall. In the same indefatigable fashion that he delivered a ten-point win for Hillary Clinton in the April Democratic primary in Pennsylvania, Rendell could deliver this crucial swing state to Obama come November. Rendell is popular statewide, and, more important in a presidential election, he continues to maintain Herculean strength in the suburbs surrounding Philadelphia, a traditional Republican stronghold that John McCain must do well in to have any chance of gaining the state.

But the real reason to pick Rendell hearkens back to that out-of-nowhere quip after the Farrakhan rally. It's his very unconventionality that makes him such an intriguing choice. Craving some pizzazz to counter the watch-your-back mentality that has become Washington politics? Pick Rendell. Want passion, candor, off-the-cuff gems, moments of keen insight? Pick Rendell. It's true that his one real foray into national politics, as Democratic National Committee chair under Al Gore when he was running for president, ended up in what some would say was ex-

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communication because of a tendency to speak out of turn. But that's what makes Rendell arguably the most refreshing politician in the country.

A large, hairy bear of a man, Rendell would enliven Washington in a way that nobody has in years. He doesn't double-talk when it comes to describing political reality. Like when he told me he would never consider being a U.S. senator: "It's an incredibly easy job. They don't do shit." Like how he described his address to the Democratic National Convention in the 1980s: "Thirty seconds into my speech, it dawned on me that I could have been reading the best parts of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and it wouldn't have mattered. … No one was listening." Like his job description as mayor: "A good portion of my job is spent on my knees, sucking people off to keep them happy." Like his refusal to deny a quote attributed to him in *Philadelphia* magazine in which he said that the publication "sucks the big wong": "Anybody who knows me knows that it has the ring of truth, so I'm cooked. If I had said, 'Your magazine eats shit,' I could have denied it."

Choosing someone as vice president because he's more Jackie Mason than Jack Kennedy probably does not seem like such a good idea. But Rendell is also one of the smartest, most intuitive politicians in the country. And he would bring to Obama a unique gift for keeping the right people happy. He did it for eight years as mayor from 1992 to 2000 when he turned the contentious Philadelphia City Council into a rubber stamp for his policies because of his personal charm.

He has been perhaps even more impressive in Pennsylvania as governor, given that he has been forced to deal most of the time with a Republican-controlled legislature with as much intellectual wattage as one of those green-friendly dim-lit curlicue bulbs, but without the good intent. Under such conditions, Rendell has managed to make real strides in energy, the environment, education, and economic development. His entire experience as a politician has been administrative, an important counterpoint to the exclusively legislative experience of Obama. It could make for a fascinating marriage of the idealist and the schmoozing fixer.

But calling it as he sees it remains Rendell's most compelling quality. It can be a crass quip about caving in to people's demands: "If I was a woman, I'd be pregnant all the time." Or a blunt assessment of the economy after corporate suits informed him that they were closing the famous Breyers ice cream factory in Philadelphia to save on costs: "Everything you laid out—it would make a textbook study in business school, but it is a horror story to hear for the future of our country. … I'll be a two-term mayor, and I'll get out before the carnage really starts, but what's going to happen to our country?" Or the sheer frustration after being accosted for hours at a public meeting by working-class whites feeling alienated and angry: "This country is really fucked up."

Whatever the subject, Rendell is not shy about exposing uncomfortable truths. Like many people, his greatest strength is also his greatest weakness. During the Pennsylvania primary, he declared that some Pennsylvanians would simply not vote for Obama because he is African American. He was, of course, right, but his candor (not to mention his Elmer Gantry–like proselytizing for Hillary) didn't exactly endear him to the Obama camp. In a national campaign, Rendell would need to follow a carefully controlled script, which is not only impossible for him, but would neuter the very qualities that make him so special.

Which is a shame. Because of the blunt way he handled union leaders threatening a massive strike during a pivotal contract negotiation: "I don't want to be a shit, and I don't want to be anti-labor, but I can't grow hair, and I can't grow money." Because of the way, after eight murders one weekend summer night, he passed an impoverished stretch of Philadelphia and concluded there was only one hope of reduced violence: "What we need in this town is on every fucking weekend between now and September for it to rain." Because of what he—and he alone admits—about the entrenchment of racial politics: "Everything that goes on is a power struggle between black politicians and white politicians, and it isn't because of what's good for the citizens. It's about who controls what project. I'm so fed up with this blackmail stuff that goes on, I could just scream. I could just take a machine gun and shoot 'em all."

Would you want a man who says something as blunt as that to be your vice president? The answer is obvious. But that's not U.S. politics anymore. It's a style that has become anachronistic since the days of Truman. Which is also why Rendell's chances of becoming vice president are also obvious. As he might put it himself: no shot.

Buzz Bissinger

Buzz Bissinger is the author of A Prayer for the City, an insider's look at Ed Rendell and his administration when he was mayor of Philadelphia.

Nunn Sense

The quiet appeal of Sam Nunn.

It has become a quadrennial political ritual that, when a Democratic nominee needs a running mate, Sam Nunn's name shall be mentioned. It was thus in 1988, when Margaret Carlson opined in *Time* that "[t]o many Democratic Party leaders, Michael Dukakis and Sam Nunn would make such a perfect pair in the fall election that the big question has become not whether Dukakis will offer the taciturn Georgia Senator the second spot on the ticket but whether Nunn will accept it." It was thus in 1992, when Paul Gigot mused of Bill Clinton, "If you're going to play to the center, why not name Sam Nunn?" It was thus in 2000, when the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Al Gore's rumored "mystery candidate [for veep] is retired U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn of Georgia." And it was thus four years later, when *National Journal* declared that "[t]he choice of Nunn would be a very interesting one."

And so it is again. The former Georgia senator has recently been floated everywhere—from David Brooks's

1853
In Cuba at the time of his inauguration, Vice President William Rufus King takes his oath abroad by special action of Congress. Upon his return to the United States, he dies.

1865
Former vice president John C. Breckinridge, becomes secretary of war for the Confederate government; when the Civil War ends, he is charged with treason and flees to Cuba.

ROGER L. WOLLENBERG/UPI/LANDOV

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1865
Whiskey-befuddled Vice President–elect Andrew Johnson spends his inauguration haranguing his colleagues about his humble origins. While attempting to administer the oaths of office to new senators, Johnson becomes so confused that he is forced to hand the duty over to a Senate clerk.

1901
Republican Party leaders decide to "kick [Theodore Roosevelt] upstairs" into the vice presidency where he can't do any harm. Party boss Mark Hanna tells newly elected president William McKinley, "Your job is to live for the next four years." He doesn't.

New York Times column to the Sunday talk shows to the insider political blogs. One reason Nunn's name is such a hardy perennial is that he's tailor-made for the veepstakes. He is the Washington establishment's archetype of a vice president: undeniably qualified, yet low-key and uninterested in personal glory. He is, in many ways, what Dick Cheney promised to be before it grew evident that Cheney had lost his marbles. And, this year, Nunn would make more sense than ever, bringing to the ticket several vital qualities that Obama could use: impeccable national-security credentials, an air of seasoned gravitas, a Southern drawl that is anything but "elitist."

Yet some insiders call the latest Nunn talk fanciful. One Democratic operative offered me a million-dollar bet against the proposition. And, when asked about the chances of Nunn on the ticket, another veteran party strategist replied, "Nunn. Get it?"

No! To the contrary, the time has come for Sam Nunn.

The case begins with war and peace. The two greatest security threats America faces are the toll of the Iraq war and the specter of nuclear terrorism. Nunn happens to be an expert on both the military and "loose nukes." He served for eight of his 24 years in the Senate as chairman of the Armed Services Committee, becoming one of Washington's top defense policy gurus. For years, his opposition to the first Gulf war was a crippling liability. But now, as an opponent of both Iraq invasions, Nunn is back in step with the popular mood. The same goes for his relentless focus on securing and dismantling loose nuclear weapons and materials lest they fall into the hands of people who want to incinerate U.S. cities. His signature Senate achievement was a cooperative U.S.-Russian program to reduce nuclear stockpiles and shore up security at former Soviet nuclear sites. That program, wrote one prominent author, "has proven to be one of the most important investments we could have made to protect ourselves from catastrophe." The author? Barack Obama, in *The Audacity of Hope*. Nunn continues that work today at the Washington-based Nuclear Threat Initiative, a private foundation that has repeatedly stepped in on counter-proliferation tasks the Bush administration has neglected, like rescuing bomb-usable uranium from rickety Eastern European sites. Some might doubt whether Obama is ready for that 3 a.m. phone call, but Nunn—who is already an Obama policy adviser—certainly would be, especially in an era when that phone call is ever more likely to involve a loose nuke.

Veep Week at TNR.com

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In this case, good policy makes for good politics, too. Nunn would defend one of Obama's weakest flanks. John McCain is already hammering at Obama's national-security inexperience. With both his resumé and his almost funereally sober disposition, Nunn would be an anvil to that hammer. Obama could always choose a military man like former NATO commander Wesley Clark. But Clark's brief 2004 campaign showed that generals aren't natural politicians. Surely it's wiser to choose someone who both knows the military *and* how to chow corn dogs at county fairs, as Nunn did during his four winning Senate campaigns.

The electoral map? No, Nunn doesn't offer a grand prize like Ohio or Pennsylvania. Georgia, after all, went for George W. Bush by a 17-point margin in 2004. But, with a likely surge in black turnout, plus the libertarian candidacy of former Georgia GOP representative Bob Barr, an Obama-Nunn ticket could put the state's 15 electoral votes into play. And, even if Georgia is a bridge too far, Virginia and Florida voters might respond to a bona fide southerner on the ticket.

Nunn would guarantee Obama one unfortunate thing: a backlash from gay and lesbian activists, who are already refreshing bitter memories about the lead role Nunn played in quashing Bill Clinton's 1993 attempt to allow gays to serve openly in the military. Nunn's hard stand, which included photo-op tours of cramped U.S. submarine bunks, has been branded "bigotry" by gay bloggers. But Nunn conveyed less of a sense of personal morality than an obligation, as Armed Services Committee chairman, to represent the military's views. And, although Obama favors ending the awkward "don't ask, don't tell" policy that emerged from Nunn's opposition, veep choices often successfully renounce past positions to mesh with nominees. (Think of Joe Lieberman and affirmative action in 2000, or George H. W. Bush and abortion in 1980.) Nunn is already inching in that direction: This week, he told an Atlanta reporter that "times change" and "it's appropriate to take another look" at the policy.

But the notion that Nunn would dictate social policy to Obama is silly. And, while Nunn would provoke some rancor from the base, he would more than offset it with swing voters. Nunn fetishizes the concept of bipartisanship in politics and nonpartisanship in foreign policy—last year, he spoke with New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Unity08 about a third-party ticket—which would neatly supplement Obama's post-partisan vision. It's true that Nunn and Obama may have different visions of bipartisanship: Nunn followed the old Southern Democratic model of centrism, which tended to define the center as a point of compromise with deal-making Republicans. Obama's version is based more on tone than substance—on treating political rivals with respect while capitalizing on points of majority support for progressive goals. But Obama would set the public tone, and Nunn could quietly cut any necessary deals on Capitol Hill. And Nunn promoters say his centrist Senate record, plus his calm demeanor, will comfort moderate voters worried that Obama is a jejune liberal. As longtime friend and former Democratic Senator David Boren of Oklahoma puts it, Nunn is "a reassuring father figure."

Some strategists might object that, at 70 this fall, Nunn is too old. Better to pick someone who can be

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Peter N. Stearns is Provost and Professor of History at George Mason University. He received a Bachelor's degree *summa cum laude*, a Master's degree, and a doctorate in History from Harvard University. He has written widely about world history. While at Carnegie Mellon, he won the Smith Award for Teaching and Educational Service in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as the Spencer Award for Distinguished Teaching.

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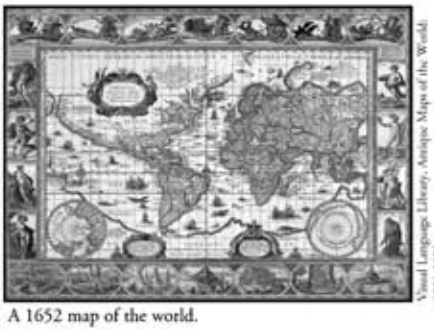

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1902
When a crystal chandelier in Roosevelt's White House insists on tinkling, the president tells his butler to install it in Vice President Charles Fairbanks's office: "He needs something to keep him awake."

1917
Vice President Thomas R. Marshall becomes famous for declaring that the nation needed "a good five-cent cigar." Later, he is revealed to have cribbed the coinage from a cartoon.

Obama's heir apparent. Another argument for Nunn! Few things would mollify the embittered Clinton machine more than an Obama running mate who isn't an instant threat to Hillary's future presidential ambitions.

Nunn, who declined an interview, has recently said he considers the chances of being offered—or accepting—the veep slot "highly improbable." But people close to him believe he will be seriously considered and that he would have trouble refusing if asked. Obama should give the idea hard thought. Democrats won't have Sam Nunn's name to kick around forever.

Michael Crowley

Extreme Makeover

Tim Pawlenty's proletarian chic.

Among the many ironclad rules for serious vice-presidential contenders are the following: First, always demonstrate the requisite humility by studiously avoiding profiles by Washington journalists. Second, if a reporter does land an interview, resist leading him into a seedy drinking establishment on a Sunday afternoon. Finally, as a corollary to this point, refrain from placing the clientele of such establishments in headlocks—however affectionate the headlocks may be.

That I recently witnessed Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty wrapping his arms around the head of a mustachioed bar patron might not speak well for his veep prospects. But, if John McCain places Pawlenty on his ticket, these won't be the only precedents he shatters. To take another one completely at random, Pawlenty will be the first presidential running mate to have worn a mullet into middle age.

My encounter with Pawlenty actually began as a wholesome affair. I'd shown up to watch him welcome home a detachment of national guardsmen in Roseville, a Minneapolis suburb. At 47, he is lean and vigorous, with plush brown hair. He beamed like a scoutmaster awarding merit badges. Every sibling of a returning guardsman was prompted to expound on the pride they felt. Every spouse was urged to catalogue the difficulties they'd faced alone. The kids were especially doted over. "I wonder if I met you guys before? You guys gave me the rabbit ears," Pawlenty said to the young daughters of one of the battalion's former officers. It turned out that this first meeting had moved the elder daughter to write a "biography" of Pawlenty for school. "You did?" he gushed. "You didn't even talk to me."

As we were leaving, a stout, middle-aged woman with short, reddish hair flagged the governor down. "Them guys want to buy you a beer," she announced. Pawlenty was bemused. He is taller than average, but his shoulders are narrower than you want them to be. "Oh yeah? Who's them guys?" he asked. The next thing I knew, we were in a dimly lit bar adjoining the American Legion hall where the ceremony had taken place. It was barely three o'clock, but the regulars looked like they'd been imbibing for hours. Women with faded tattoos fought to snap cell-phone pictures. ("I don't want a group photo, I want to be alone," demanded one.) A shaggy-looking man named Mer sidled up to Pawlenty, who greeted him with a disquisition on nearby fast-food joints. ("I used to date a girl in Roseville," the governor said, explaining his knowledge of the local cuisine.) Pawlenty only managed to pry himself loose by pleading that his wife would kill him if he turned up even later. This prompted more cooing. "Ooh, I love your wife. . . . She knows how to fish," exclaimed a woman named Joyce.

In recent years, as the GOP's K Street ties have ravaged its image and the Bush administration has grown oblivious to the struggles of ordinary Americans, a vanguard of conservative intellectuals has proposed rebuilding the party along populist lines. "Sam's Club Republicanism," as the likes of David Brooks imagine it, would ease the economic anxieties of working-class voters while promoting old-fashioned virtues like marriage and child-rearing. As a political strategy, it would bond Reagan Democrats to the GOP once and for all, something that's grown increasingly urgent amid the attrition of the last few years.

As it happens, it was Pawlenty—the son of a truck driver from the blue-collar enclave of South St. Paul—who first coined the Sam's Club phrase back in 2001. At the time, Pawlenty found himself in a fight for the gubernatorial nomination with a millionaire political novice named Brian Sullivan. Sullivan had spent a minor fortune touting himself as the embodiment of conservative purity. Pawlenty's response was to paint Sullivan as an *economic* elitist. He wondered if Sullivan might reinforce "the stereotype of the Republican Party . . . that we're all a bunch of wealthy snobs" and urged the party to reach out to member's of "Sam's Club, not just the country club." That Pawlenty not only won the nomination, but went on to win two terms as governor of a Democratic state, has, not surprisingly, turned heads in Washington. Even Ted Kennedy has pronounced him "one of the most persuasive Republicans I've ever heard." But, while there's no doubting Pawlenty's considerable political skills—and the impeccable logic of a McCain-Pawlenty ticket—he also highlights the implausibility of the GOP's working-class makeover.

That Pawlenty would feel at home among downscale Minnesotans is hardly surprising: He literally was at home with them for his first 18 years. Pawlenty's Teamster father was part of the Eastern European working class that powered South St. Paul's once-thriving slaughterhouses. "People used to tease us because the town had a certain smell to it," Pawlenty recalls. "They'd say, 'God, something smells so bad.' We'd say, 'What are you talking about?' We didn't notice." Few people moved in or, more surprisingly, out of the community. But its strong union presence, its proud conservative ethic, and its first-rate schools led to a gradually rising affluence during the first half of the twentieth century.

Beginning in the late '60s, however, the meat-processing plants began to close as the industry decentralized. The layoffs created massive unemployment—nearly 10,000 lost jobs in a town of 25,000. By the time Pawlenty, the youngest of five children, was a teenager, it

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was clear that the stockyards were doomed. Pawlenty's cancer-stricken mother made his siblings promise to send him to college—he would be the first in his family to go.

Pawlenty put himself through the University of Minnesota and then law school. He spent several years at a prestigious Minneapolis firm, nurturing his political career along the way. In 1988, Pawlenty served as the political director for the reelection of U.S. Senator Dave Durenberger, a moderate Republican. Pawlenty became majority leader of the state House of Representatives in 1998, a mere six years after entering the chamber.

One of the names that often surfaces in discussions of Pawlenty—with both admirers and detractors—is Richard Nixon, another whip-smart outsider who quickly ascended the political ranks. "A line on Pawlenty for a long time is that he has very much wanted to be a member of the political and moneyed class," says David Strom, an anti-tax activist who's worked closely with Pawlenty. "I don't mean it in an unflattering way, but Nixon was very much the same way—trying to get into that club which he wasn't born into."

When you look back over Pawlenty's career, it's not hard to discern an ambitious climber—even flashes of Nixonian cunning. Back in 2001, for example, Pawlenty was preparing to run for U.S. Senate while his GOP rival, former St. Paul mayor Norm Coleman, made a bid for governor. But the White House had other plans. It believed Coleman would be the stronger Senate candidate and persuaded him to change course. As the story goes, no less an eminence than Dick Cheney called Pawlenty the morning of his campaign announcement and asked him to step aside. Less well-known is that the call, according to people close to the situation, was engineered by Pawlenty himself—and that there *were* no plans for an announcement. After the White House privately threw its weight behind Coleman, Pawlenty negotiated the dramatic call as a kind of consolation prize. He reasoned that a personal plea from such a high-profile Republican would demonstrate that Washington took him seriously.

Whatever the behind-the-scenes intrigue, Pawlenty's public profile has always held a certain appeal. He may be the first generation of politician to benefit from a kind of working-class identity politics, and he endlessly exudes what you might call blue-collar pride. "Let me give you the quick rundown," he said during our interview. "My oldest brother Steve worked for most of life—forty-plus years—in a grocery store. He was with the United Food Commercial Workers. My other brother Dan spent most of his life in an oil refinery; he's now a municipal worker. . . . My sister Rose is a special-ed aide in a public school. My other sister has been a secretary for forty years."

As governor, Pawlenty has bashed pharmaceutical companies for gouging consumers and oil companies for stifling alternative fuels like ethanol. He once took after wealthy Indian casino operators, suggesting they split their profits with the state. And, in the classic Reagan Democrat mold, he's coupled his populism with a social conservatism nourished by his Catholic upbringing—an abortion "right to know" law and efforts to ban gay marriage and ease restrictions on concealed weapons. "Pawlenty would send all the right signals to conservatives, but he's not going to scare moderates and independents," says Todd Harris, recently a strategist with Fred Thompson's presidential campaign.

It all sounds like perfect veep grist. But there's a rub: As McCain's vetters rifle through their Pawlenty dossier, they're sure to home in on a longtime associate named Elam Baer. During the 2002 gubernatorial campaign, a telecom company owned by Baer paid Pawlenty $4,500 per month in unspecified consulting fees, some $60,000 in all. Though his office points out that the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board found no wrongdoing, Pawlenty has never fully explained what he did to earn the money. He also served on the board of another Baer venture when a subsidiary switched unwitting customers to less desirable calling plans. (Pawlenty has said he was unaware of the practice, which cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars to settle.)

Neither charge is especially damning in itself. But they do hint at a broader problem with Pawlenty's image. Sure, he's happy to break with GOP orthodoxy. To name some recent examples: He's negotiated a regional reduction in greenhouse gases and even flirted with raising the state's gas tax. But, when you pore over his record, those deviations are the outliers. For all the talk of Sam's Club, he's governed as a standard-issue fat-cat Republican.

There is, in fact, little in Pawlenty's oeuvre that Grover Norquist would object to, as Norquist himself recently assured me. Back in 2002, he signed a no-new-taxes pledge thrust upon him by Strom's advocacy group. At the time, Minnesota was facing a projected two-year deficit of about $1.6 billion. When he took office the following year, the figure had ballooned to over $4 billion, much of that thanks to the upper-income tax cuts he'd pushed as majority leader. Yet Pawlenty didn't relent. He cut massively from social spending programs and aid to local governments. This resulted in years of rising property taxes. (Pawlenty notes in response that property taxes get set locally. "We expected cities and counties to keep a lid on taxes and hold down spending," he says.)

As Democrats have gained ground in the legislature, Pawlenty has supported marginally more spending on health care, education, and infrastructure. But no one could confuse him for Hubert Humphrey (or, for that matter, George W. Bush). Even Pawlenty's high-profile assaults on drugmakers and oil men fizzle upon scrutiny. The only practical upshot of the pharma initiative was an infrequently visited website flagging drug bargains in Canada. His tough words for Big Oil trailed off once the 2006 campaign ended.

Talking to Pawlenty at the American Legion hall, I got the impression his strain of Sam's Club Republicanism is largely about marketing. I asked if the party could survive in its present form—with working-class people delivering more and more votes, but wealthy people providing most of the financing. "I don't think it's a class-warfare issue at all," he told me. We were sitting at a brown folding table. Pawlenty kept his hands in his lap and leaned toward me, giving him the look of a dutiful grammar student. "We have to change not [our] values and principles—I want to be clear about that. . . . We're going to have to do a much better job about

1925
A nap in his hotel room prevents new Vice President Charles G. Dawes from delivering a tie-breaking vote in the Senate on the confirmation of attorney general nominee Charles Warren. Warren is never confirmed.

1932
Herbert Hoover's vice president, Charles Curtis, calls a group of voters "dirty cowards" for protesting the government's treatment of veterans during the Depression. Later, he blames the Depression on Americans, "too damn dumb" to understand economics.

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1933
John Nance Garner becomes FDR's first vice president; Garner later describes his office as "not worth a bucket of warm piss" and says that accepting the vice presidency was the "worst damn fool mistake I ever made."

1949
Widowed vice president Alben Barkley, oldest v.p. ever at 71, falls for a 38-year-old widow and sends her love notes from the Senate. They are eventually married.

having messengers, messages that resonate. . . . It helps if you could say, 'Look, I've been in your spot. Let me tell you how it worked, didn't work for me.'" Pawlenty may genuinely want to ease the strain on working people. But what he's selling them is a self-help manual, albeit in language they can relate to. It's not the party of Sam's Club per se—but of moving from Sam's Club to the country club in ten simple steps.

That's a shame, because Pawlenty seems to have earnest public-policy interests. (One quirky if modest Pawlenty idea: sell Canadian prescription drugs at American Indian reservations.) His former boss Dave Durenberger, who now heads a health policy think tank at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, recalls the young Pawlenty barraging him with policy questions on their many car rides across the state. Durenberger goes so far as to say Pawlenty would have been more comfortable in the U.S. Senate, where he could have embraced his wonkish instincts, rather than the governor's mansion, where he faces constant hectoring from conservatives.

As he moves toward a possible berth on a McCain ticket, Pawlenty is discovering that national GOP politics are, if anything, even more restrictive. He seems to have learned that, in today's Republican Party, the surest way to jeopardize a promising career is to have your fiscal manhood called into question. Back at the American Legion hall, I asked why he thought Mike Huckabee had come up short this year. Pawlenty told me that "social conservatives, faith-based conservatives really liked his message. But there were some economic conservatives who did not." There are certain rules even a barroom headlocker knows he can't break.

Noam Scheiber

Huck Yeah

The gonzo conservatism of Mike Huckabee.

If the first rule of picking a running mate is to risk as little harm to the ticket as possible, then Mike Huckabee shouldn't be John McCain's first choice for veep—or his second, third, or fourth, for that matter. With the exception of a certain junior senator from Illinois, Huckabee is easily the most interesting political talent to emerge during this campaign season. But he's also the most unpolished and unpredictable, with a longer list of enemies than any politician so new to the national stage ought to have and a regiment of Arkansas skeletons clattering around in his closet. Few of McCain's potential veeps are so vulnerable to caricature, few would draw so much fire from within the GOP, and few are as easy to imagine lurching cheerfully off-message in the heat of the campaign, alienating a key constituency with an ill-timed gaffe or a badly played attempt at humor.

But, in passing over Huckabee—as he almost certainly will—McCain will be passing over a politician who embodies more than a few of the traits that the Arizona senator ought to be looking for in a running mate, both in terms of reinforcing his strengths and balancing out his weaknesses. Like McCain, Huckabee has self-consciously branded himself a "different kind of Republican," which happens to be the only sort of Republican with a chance to win the White House this November. But he's a different kind of "different kind of Republican" than the Arizona senator—a competent governor rather than a maverick legislator, with a record that's defined by kitchen-table issues like health care, education, and transportation rather than the more boutique causes (campaign-finance reform, say, or the crusade against earmarks) that McCain tends to champion.

Both men share a reformist temper, but Huckabee's is grounded more in religious conviction than in the ideals of honor and national service that animate McCain. Both speak the language of populism, but their appeals are pitched to different audiences: in McCain's case, to good-government enthusiasts and foes of "special interests"; in Huckabee's, to a rising generation of religious conservatives interested in expanding their movement's portfolio to encompass issues like poverty and the environment as well as abortion and same-sex marriage. Both share an easy rapport with the press, but their personal styles—the smooth-talking charmer versus the gruff straight-shooter—are complementary rather than redundant. And both share a Scots-Irish patrimony, which promises to be useful in a race that may be decided in the Scots-Irish belt that runs from Arkansas and Missouri up to Pennsylvania and Ohio, while representing very different types within that demographic—the charismatic preacher and the military man. (Given that the relationship between a president and vice president is often defined by mutual distrust, Huckabee's obvious man-crush on McCain would also represent a plus.)

This rosy assessment, of course, leaves out a few crucial points. Huckabee talks a vastly better recession-year game on issues like health care and the economy than McCain, but, when it comes to actual policy, his expertise seems to end at the Arkansas border. His achievements as governor were real enough, but he ran for president on the too-good-to-be-true FairTax boondoggle and not much else. He represents a constituency—religious conservatives—that McCain badly needs to turn out in November, but he's picked fights with just about every other interest group on the contemporary right, from libertarians to supply-siders to Rush Limbaugh–listeners, most of whom already have more than a few reasons to be suspicious of McCain.

Moreover, while Huckabee speaks the language of new-model evangelicalism, cut loose from the bigotries of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, he has enough hard-shell Baptist baggage of his own to give the willies to everyone from Catholic voters (who conspicuously failed to embrace him in states like Michigan and New Hampshire) to business-class Republicans to secular journalists. The press corps smiled on Huckabee during the primary season for many of the same reasons it liked McCain way back in 2000—because he was a plucky and accessible underdog taking on the GOP establishment on a shoestring budget. But it's hard to imagine that he'd earn the same sort of favor-

GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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able coverage once reporters contemplated the prospect of having a crypto-Creationist a heartbeat away from the presidency.

A McCain-Huckabee ticket, then, would make sense only if McCain were running a very different sort of campaign—if he were in the mood to blow up the GOP in the name of "creative destruction," as his neoconservative admirers famously urged him to do back in 2000, rather than betting that he can hold the fracturing, feuding Reagan coalition together long enough to achieve one last victory. Picking Huckabee would represent a gamble that the future of the party lies with some odd amalgam of right-wing heterodoxies; that many of the movement-conservative institutions that served the GOP during its rise to power need to be attacked, rather than reformed; and that the best way to push the Republican Party beyond its current impasse would be to run a ramshackle, ideologically confusing, shoot-from-the-hip campaign and hope it turned out OK in the end.

This is not, to put it mildly, the way that McCain seems intent on conducting his general-election campaign—which is probably a wise decision, since political "creative destruction" is often more destructive than creative. But it would sure be fun to watch.

ROSS DOUTHAT

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Second to None

Mike Bloomberg, backseat driver.

FRANCES M. ROBERTS/NEWSOM

THOUGH HE'S NEVER been involved in national politics, the one man with the odd distinction of appearing on both Barack Obama's and John McCain's vice-presidential shortlists has more name recognition than any contender shy of Hillary Clinton. His surname festoons more than 126 offices worldwide, adorns a 24-hour cable news network, is cited in newspapers around the globe, and is credited as a producer on each night's episode of "Charlie Rose."

That name—"ethnic," as he has noted, "and all the more memorable for it"—is Bloomberg. And the candidates have not been shy about their affection for Mike. In March, at Obama's request, the New York mayor warmly introduced Obama at an economic address in the city; Obama, in turn, praised Bloomberg for his "extraordinary leadership." The relationship between McCain and Bloomberg goes back further: McCain endorsed Bloomberg early when he ran for mayor in 2001. "I got elected because of you," the mayor publicly said to McCain before a speech in April. And, just a few weeks ago, McCain enjoyed a private breakfast on Manhattan's Central Park South with Bloomberg and his girlfriend, Diana Taylor, at which the v.p. slot was reportedly discussed.

It's easy to see why Bloomberg—or the idea of Bloomberg—is so appealing to both presumptive nominees. McCain and Obama both believe that the brand of politics Bloomberg has come to represent—intelligent, technocratic, results-oriented, bipartisan, or, variously, post-partisan—is their own. To tap Bloomberg, a Democrat-turned-Republican-turned-independent, would represent a genuine break from the red state/blue state, liberal/conservative binary status quo that both candidates decry. Politically, Bloomberg represents Obama and McCain as they see themselves. He would be, in short, the ultimate vanity veep—and part of that vanity would come in ignoring just how bad a choice he would be.

MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG was the first 9/11 politician. When the towers fell, he was treading water in an expensive, quixotic campaign to succeed Rudolph Giuliani. A lifetime Democrat who switched his registration to Republican in order to run in a less crowded primary, his pitch was simple: A spectacularly rich guy cannot be bought. He could, however, spend, and his record-shattering ad blitz centering on the suddenly heroic Giuliani's endorsement was enough to eke out a victory.

As mayor, Bloomberg has been terrific. The New York City crime rate, which began to plummet under Giuliani, went through the floor under his successor, whose inclusive approach ameliorated Giuliani-era racial tension. The city's economy came roaring back after the World Trade Center attacks, and he's cut thousands of employees from the city payroll. The smoking ban that he pushed through essentially by fiat, controversial in 2003, is now a model for such unlikely cities as Paris and Dublin. Even as a restless lame duck, and even as he endlessly toys with a presidential bid, Bloomberg's approval rating remains around 70 percent.

In some ways, Bloomberg would also be good for both Obama and McCain. Neither presumptive candidate has much management experience, while Bloomberg built a thriving business empire from scratch and was mayor of New York for two terms. He also could shore up support for either in Florida, where Jews make up almost 5 percent of registered voters. The economy is expected to be a key issue in the campaign—and who better than a successful entrepreneur and (mostly) balanced-budget steward of our greatest city to put an exclamation point on a candidate's economic plan? And, finally, tantalizingly, there's his money. *So . . . much . . . money*. Bloomberg, worth an estimated $20 billion, spent more than $70 million in his first election and $83 million in 2005 against the hapless Freddy Ferrer. What might a guy like that spend in a competitive race? To become vice president? Deputy Mayor for Government Affairs Kevin Sheekey helpfully ballparked the sum at "between zero and a billion."

And yet. The political hurdles in the way of a Bloomberg selection appear insurmountable. Obama's already doing well with the upper-class voters who might get excited by the prospect of a divorced Jewish billionaire on the ticket. Though Mayor Mike was remarkably adept at winning over NYC's salt of the earth,

1961
Lyndon Johnson, known by JFK's aides as "Uncle Cornpone," visits India and lets loose a war whoop to hear the echo in the Taj Mahal.

1973
Faced with criminal charges of bribery and corruption, Vice President Spiro Agnew declares, "I will not resign if indicted!" Two weeks later, he resigns.

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1974
Congress creates the vice-presidential mansion near the Naval Observatory, which multi-millionaire Vice President Nelson Rockefeller furnishes with a $35,000 mink-covered bed and stays in for only a single night.

1992
Vice President Dan Quayle instructs a 12-year-old to correct his spelling of "potato" by adding an "e."

the older women and bitter men of Appalachia are unlikely to be as welcoming, even if he was the first Jew in the Phi Kappa Psi frat at Johns Hopkins. Plus, Obama really doesn't need to team up with another guy who thinks he's smarter than the room. (From his 1997 autobiography, *Bloomberg by Bloomberg*: "I too think I can do everything better than anyone else.")

A McCain-Bloomberg ticket has its own difficulties. To pick someone who isn't—and never really was—a Republican would signal one of two things: either a lot of confidence in McCain's right-wing support or an absolute, overwhelming need to disassociate from the Republican brand. Neither is very likely. On the first, McCain can hardly take for granted the hard GOP right: Though the Republican race is considered long over, McCain rarely pulled more than 80 percent of votes in primaries since February—a telling sign that he still needs to woo the GOP faithful. McCain is also in no position to turn his back on the party so publicly. (There's a structural problem here, too: The Republican National Committee is paying for McCain's campaign to an unprecedented extent. This isn't really the time for him to stick his thumb in their eye.)

Finally, there's the little matter of how ill-suited Bloomberg is for the job. To begin with, there's been one consistent failing of Bloomberg's tenure as mayor, from the West Side stadium debacle to this spring's congestion-pricing flame-out: his dislike, and disregard, for politics. When journalist Chris Smith asked Bloomberg in 2005 what the biggest surprise about being mayor was, he answered: "The politics. That's the disappointing thing. You try to convince them to vote for something, and there is, 'What's in it for me?' That is depressing. . . . [I]t's much more horse-trading than analysis." In *Bloomberg by Bloomberg*, he confessed he has "no interest in being a legislator. The pace, the focus, and the compromises don't appeal to me. The legislative process is so boring that I'd last for all of five minutes as a senator or congressman." These aren't qualities one looks for in a prospective v.p.

The other trouble is that, as laughably vague as vice-presidential duties are, one thing is clear: The v.p. is not in charge of anything. And Bloomberg hasn't been subordinate to anyone since he was fired by Salomon Brothers more than a quarter-century ago. A successful vice president cajoles, manipulates, infights, worms his way into influence. Dick Cheney was a master at handling bureaucracy after years as a White House chief of staff, representative, and secretary of Defense. This was not a man disappointed by the realities of horse-trade politics: This was a man with a stable full of horses. Bloomberg's former pollster Doug Schoen suggested that Bloomberg would accept the v.p. slot if handed a broad portfolio, maybe "Super Duper Treasury secretary." But then why not make him Treasury secretary?

Bloomberg really should run for a third term as mayor of New York, but he can't (though he has commissioned a poll on undoing term limits). Still, that doesn't mean he should run for vice president instead. He wouldn't do McCain or Obama much good as a running mate. And the vice presidency wouldn't do him any good, either.

Ben Wasserstein

The Rules

How McCain should pick 'em.

Some years ago, C-SPAN's Brian Lamb played a dirty trick on a journalist friend of mine. My friend was appearing on C-SPAN's "Washington Journal" to discuss recent events. If I remember right, my friend was expanding on the future of East Timor when Lamb abruptly shifted the conversation. It was, Lamb announced, "vice-presidents week," at C-SPAN: surely one of the network's most successful ratings stunts—and, more importantly, an opportunity for Lamb to deploy his notorious deadpan humor.

"Tell us which vice president of the United States this is," Lamb commanded. A look of concern flashed across my friend's face as a sad-faced man with a drooping mustache appeared on the screen. My friend confessed his ignorance. "It's Garrett Hobart, McKinley's first vice president."

My friend struggled to return to East Timor. No dice. Later, Lamb cued a sepia photo of an elderly gentleman with bushy eyebrows tugging on an enormous cigar. "See if you recognize this fellow." My friend drew another blank. "That's John Nance Garner, former speaker of the House."

And so it went. In all the handicapper's excitement of the vice-presidential guessing game, it's easy to lose sight of the hard truth of American politics: It's rare that a vice-presidential choice makes any difference at all to the outcome of a race.

Presidential nominees have used vice-presidential choices to accomplish one or more of three main goals: unite their party, extend their demographic appeal, and balance some perceived personal deficiency. Thus Bob Dole chose Jack Kemp in 1996 to assuage the GOP right wing (ironically, the same reason that Gerald Ford had chosen Dole back in 1976). On the Democratic side, Jimmy Carter picked Walter Mondale in 1976 to reassure party liberals. The elder Bush opted for Dan Quayle in 1988 in hopes of wooing younger voters, much as Walter Mondale had chosen Geraldine Ferraro in an effort to mobilize women and George McGovern had hoped that Sargent Shriver would stanch his losses among Catholics. John Kerry chose John Edwards in 2004 to extend his appeal into the South and to balance his image as a scion of privilege.

None of these gambits worked. Edwards not only failed to deliver his own state to Kerry, but even his own county. Ferraro did not deliver women, Quayle did not deliver youth, and Catholics defected to Nixon in 1972.

Even the seeming exceptions to the rule only confirm it. In 1952, Adlai Stevenson chose John Sparkman of Alabama as his running mate. Reinforced by Sparkman's (tepid) segregationist voting record, the liberal Stevenson carried the Deep South. Four years later, Stevenson ran alongside the anti-segregationist Estes Kefauver—and once again carried the Deep South.

There is probably only one example in recent political history of a vice-presidential choice doing the chooser any real good: John F. Kennedy's selection of Lyndon Johnson in 1960, which greatly helped to return Texas to the Democratic column after the state

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GIULIANI: JOHN ZEEDICK/BETTY IMAGES/NEWSCOM; MCCAIN: UPI PHOTO/KAMENKO PAJIC/NEWSCOM

had strayed in 1952 and 1956.

Yet, if vice-presidential nominations do little good for the candidate at the top of the ticket, they do great good for the number two, especially for Republican number twos. Since World War II, ten men have received the Republican nomination for vice president. Three of those men continued on to win the presidential nomination for themselves, and two actually became president. Meanwhile, a fourth nominee, Thomas Dewey's running mate Earl Warren, rose to arguably even greater power as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. (Among Democrats, four of 13 veep nominees went on to head the ticket. Only one, Johnson, won—and he was already president when he ran.)

So as the nominee of my party, Senator John McCain, shortens his list, he should also lower his expectations. There is no running mate from the conservative wing of the party who can calm the internal anger that will be provoked if McCain reverts to his pre-primary support for so-called comprehensive immigration reform. There is no dark horse from the business community who can excite working-class voters in the absence of an exciting health care plan. This is one rare time in politics where policy in fact does count more than personnel.

Which means, Senator, you should forget about wooing evangelicals with a Mike Huckabee or women with a Carly Fiorina. Don't bother attempting to add financial expertise with a Michael Bloomberg or reaching out to party conservatives with a Mitt Romney. Don't delude yourself that a Condoleezza Rice can somehow act as a "game-changer."

Instead, keep in mind that, when you choose, you may well be choosing a future leader of the party—a leader whose impact could well equal or exceed your own. Ronald Reagan's selection of George H.W. Bush as his running mate in 1980 resonates to this day, and Richard Nixon left a more enduring mark on Republicanism than Dwight Eisenhower ever did. You never know.

If you use the second slot to make peace with an internal opponent, your moment of comity could end by overturning everything you believe in. Had John Hinckley's bullet been aimed a little more accurately, the Reagan revolution would have lasted only 69 days.

Nor should you recruit a number two to act as your attack dog. Nixon later rationalized his Spiro Agnew choice with tough talk about how Agnew could say things about political opponents that would be unpresidential coming from Nixon. But the things Agnew said were (correctly) perceived as coming from Nixon. Leave the attacks to the 527s. You can plausibly disavow them if need be. You can never disavow your running mate without looking worse than negligent yourself.

I have my own personal nomination for vice president for McCain. It's Rudy Giuliani, precisely because he shares the vision of a practical, reforming, war-winning Republican Party that inspires John McCain, plus the stronger-than-usual grounds for hoping that he might be the rare candidate who can make a difference in an essential state—in this case, New Jersey.

But, my personal preferences aside, I hope, Senator, that you will make your choice with this consideration in mind: This choice may prove to be your most important legacy to your party and your country. Your nominee probably won't help your candidacy—but he or she may secure your vision or else destroy your reputation. Sports talk about the veepstakes is good, entertaining political fun. But a party in as much trouble as the GOP in 2008 has little time for fun.

David Frum

David Frum, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a speechwriter to President George W. Bush from 2001–2002, is the author most recently of Comeback: Conservatism that Can Win Again.

2006
Vice President Dick Cheney accidently shoots a friend in the face during a quail hunt.

GREAT MOMENTS IN VEEP HISTORY Compiled by STEVEN TALLY and BEN CRAIR

Lou Beach

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Freedom Freaks

Scenes from the tragicomic demise of the Libertarian Party.

MICHAEL IDOV

It's May 23, 2008, and eleven presidential candidates are crowding the dais on a tiny stage in the Columbine Meeting Room. We're in the bowels of a Sheraton in downtown Denver, at the Libertarian National Convention some 70 miles from the party's birthplace in Colorado Springs. Many delegates expect that Colorado is about to become the location of the party's demise as well—in, oh, about 48 hours.

The would-be culprit, the twelfth candidate, is absent. He is the former representative Bob Barr, Republican of Georgia (1995–2003), who entered the race less than two weeks before the convention and the party less than two years prior, and who has skipped tonight's informal debate to host a meet-and-greet with his supporters. A central-casting Southern pol with a neat mustache and a terrifying caffeine habit (his drink of choice is a latte with five espresso shots), Barr arrives lugging some heavy baggage. In the 1990s, he was the public face of the Republican drive to impeach Bill Clinton—*before* the Lewinsky scandal broke. He introduced the Defense of Marriage Act and later signed off on the Patriot Act, two of the least beloved pieces of recent legislation among Libertarians. His PAC, the Bob Barr Leadership Fund, raised $4.3 million for Republican campaigns between 2003 and 2008—some of it while Bob was already an ostensible Libertarian. More than $4 million of that money went toward further fund-raising and "administrative" costs—including a salary for Barr's son, Derek. He says he now regrets much of this resumé. Some take him at his word. "Bob saw the light," says Aleq Boyle of Chickamauga, Georgia, a Barr lieutenant and a former Republican himself. (Libertarians use this terminology quite a bit—revelation, conversion, epiphany.) The rest suspect a Republican Trojan horse.

I call Barr aide Audrey Mullen and ask why Barr skipped the debate. "Bob wants to discuss real issues with real candidates," she says. Cold as the Rockies, but one can see her point. The eleven onstage look more like community-theater auditionees than presidential applicants. In the audience, there is a man in a Guy Fawkes mask; Starchild, a California masseur dressed as a pirate; and the Sumerian Libertarian, a white-mohawked older gentleman with saucer-size hoops in gro-

David Cowles

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tesquely distended earlobes and several bonelike objects piercing his septum.

As Brian Doherty writes in his definitive 741-page tome, *Radicals for Capitalism*, being a libertarian means "sailing on seas of opposition and indifference with an often bizarre and difficult bunch of shipmates." The movement's embrace of personal freedom is wide enough to welcome a Wall Street wing concerned mostly with deregulation; a sci-fi contingent dreaming of space colonies and immortality; a sizable anarchist (or "minarchist") faction preaching dissolution of almost all federal agencies; and, in the last few years, a steady, surly influx of 9/11 "truthers."

All and more of these groups are on proud display in Denver. Vendor booths trumpet Native American mysticism, the "inflation-proof Liberty Dollar," and, perhaps inevitably, Shotgun Willie's, a local strip club. One group is raffling off a motorcycle, with a disclaimer of opposition to helmet laws ("Those who ride should decide"). Another is showing *The Matrix* on mute, with custom subtitles. "Purity? You mean Rothbardianism?" says Keanu Reeves. Come to think of it, it's not too far from the film's original dialogue.

Barr's gamble is that enough Libertarians are fed up with this sideshow pageantry and would like some votes for a change. Since the party's foundation in 1971, the apogee of its electoral success remains 1980, when Ed Clark ran in all 50 states and captured close to a million votes. Eight years later, Ron Paul took less than half that. Paul's current run, of course, is a national phenomenon—except one unfolding outside the Libertarians' reach, a fact that imbues the convention with strange, twitchy pathos. Almost all of the delegates are Paul fans, but, because their hero is running as a GOP candidate (switching back would cost Paul his House seniority), Libertarians, come November, will have to choose between their own party and a write-in for Paul. His absence has created a gaping vacancy, and every single candidate here is trying to fill the vacuum.

With Barr otherwise engaged, the biggest name on the debate dais is former Alaska senator Mike Gravel. Another neophyte, he joined the party nearly three months ago after bowing out of a run for the Democratic nomination. Gravel used his time in the national spotlight to tape ornery cable appearances and inscrutable YouTube promos, all of which are now running on a loop at his booth (including a seasonal one that informs us, in song, that he's "running for president, and he's filled with Christmas cheer"). Gravel is candid about his motives and expectations. He's mostly mad at the Democrats—who, he says, pushed him out of the race for criticizing the U.S. stance on Iran—and would enjoy a platform from which to dish out some mild payback. His floor team includes Neal, a long-haired Wiccan who has a beef with Barr "because he tried to stop Wiccans from worshiping in the military" and granddaughter Renee, 20 years old and in full Goth regalia featuring a spiky dog collar. "He's the kind of grandpa you see on TV," she says of Gravel, tongue stud flickering between her teeth. "The one who comes to visit for Christmas, opens the presents. You know?" (I do, in fact—I've seen the video.) "This will either end my career, or give me a boost for the next six months," Gravel tells me. "I'll take either."

Most of the assembled purists save their loudest cheers for "Dr. Mary" Ruwart, a party veteran with a soft, hypnotic voice that doesn't break its motherly cadence even when she explains how the right to carry concealed weapons could have prevented September 11. (She's also on the record suggesting that children should have a right to consent to sex with adults.) Her mostly male fans have come equipped with posters that say "Mary" inside a red heart. Another old-school favorite is Steve Kubby, a cancer-battling marijuana activist who drives a 1984 Mercedes that runs on cooking oil. The Mary-Kubby people are fast congealing into an anti-Barr alliance. From my informal survey of signs and pins and hats and paddles and T-shirts, Mary has the ears of about 25 percent of the delegates and Kubby another 20 percent: enough to make Barr nervous. Ruwart suggests that she would pick up Hillary Clinton supporters, who "can't wait to vote for a woman," and the heart-Mary signs fly up.

A few doomed dabblers march across the stage, serving up a glimpse into the party's various now-endangered constituencies. Christine Smith, a New Age-y redhead with a musical twang, says things like "Ah see freedom in the ahhs of wild creatures." Alden Link is an older gentleman who talks exactly like Truman Capote, except about the Second Amendment.

And then something electrifying happens. A man from Las Vegas named Wayne Allyn Root saunters to the podium. A ruddy bookmaker and TV sports handicapper who once co-hosted a show with Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder, Root looks like a cross between "SNL"'s Darrell Hammond-as-Bill Clinton and Biff from *Back To the Future*. He's been itching to diversify from odds-making and TV appearances, and recently wrote the book *Millionaire Republican*, about "creating personal wealth in the GOP-dominated era." (It came out in 2006.) Soon after, he had his own "Libertarian awakening," as he calls it. Root's brochure baldly paints his candidacy as a pure p.r. project. His detailed "sixteen-year plan" for the party has such milestones as "Wayne hits a local college nightspot and dances with the younger set. The video makes U Tube" and "Wayne becomes a frequent guest on 'This Week with George Stephanopoulos,' Wayne's Columbia University classmate." (Stephanopoulos on Root: "I definitely didn't know him.") His other Columbia classmate? "Barrack [sic] Obama." *P.r. gold.*

Root grabs the mic, leaves the podium, and begins to prowl the stage like a motivational speaker, crossing back and forth in front of his frozen competitors. "I am *the* anti-politician! I am an s.o.b.—son of a butcher! America *needs* a son of a butcher! I know how to manipulate the media! First Jewish-American to run for president! First small businessman! First home-school dad! This is an *opportunity of a lifetime*!" His speech is all disembodied applause lines, and Root flogs and teases and massages each one for maximum impact.

Root leaves a definite mark. Compared to the low-boil Gravel, the literally and figuratively absent Barr, and the parade of amateurs that preceded him, he is the only one who seems to really enjoy being here. An impressed follower of Kubby, the pot activist, jokingly floats a "Grass-Root ticket." "I had a feeling that he was going to sell me some Ginsu knives," says another delegate when it's over. "But . . . I don't know—maybe this is what we need right now?"

Saturday's big event is another debate, a formal one, nationally televised (on C-SPAN). Since there are no primaries, all delegates have arrived officially uncommitted, and many—given microscopic variation between most contestants' platforms—may not settle on a favorite until after tonight's performance. To thin the crowded field, this year's rules require the candidates to collect 57 "tokens" each (actually paper strips) to participate in the debate and 30 more to earn a nominating speech. Soon, a rumor spreads that the threshold is going to be raised to 80 tokens at the last moment. "This is backstage dealings by the Candidate That Shall Remain Nameless," snipes Christina, Mike Gravel's (non-Wiccan) aide. Other delegates hint at coming disruptions and havoc.

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The mood in the room is like a high-school battle of the bands rocked by a whisper that there's a major-label rep in the audience: Instead of rehearsing, the musicians are running around backstage snipping each other's guitar strings.

In a possible preview of tomorrow's election, Ruwart and Barr are neck and neck, having amassed 94 "debate tokens" each. Barr, in a gesture his campaign trumpets as one of selflessness, gives some of his to Gravel: ostensibly to raise the level of discussion, possibly to secure Gravel's delegates later on. Gravel, surely grinning on the inside, then gives the excess of his tokens to Kubby.

Barr gets to speak first and uses the opening statement to sound every note he thinks the audience wants to hear. He delivers a forceful apology for much of his legislative record. The Patriot Act? "Shoot it, burn it, scatter the ashes." The Kyoto Protocol? "Don't force a Kyoto *anything* on the American people." Favorite thinker? Why, "the best philosopher of the twentieth century, Ayn Rand."

Wayne Allyn Root's favorite philosopher, by contrast, is Yogi Berra. Root replays his pitch from last night, louder, punchier, hoarser, adding a promise to deliver "twelve million of online poker enthusiasts, to whom I am a celebrity" to the party. This time, there can be no doubt this stuff works. A few men have found and adopted a barking chant—"Root! Root! Root!" "I noise-metered it," says Stephen Gordon, Barr's rail-thin, gloomy adviser, when the debate is over. He's staring at the convention hall's floor as he speaks. "Root won. Personally, it frustrates the hell out of me." Indeed, after a few hours of reflection, Root's offering of himself as an effective empty vessel for the party's message—no history, no baggage, just moxie—begins to seem brilliant.

By Sunday morning, all nerves are fraying. There's another persistent rumor—cheerful to some, frightening to others—that a last-minute busload of pissed-off anti-Barr anarchists, summoned by Kubby, is on its way to the Sheraton. Pacing in the elevator on the way from his suite to the battlefield, Steve Dasbach, the party's former national chairman who will be giving a speech nominating Barr, sourly predicts at least three ballots. "Don't cast me aside because I'm a latecomer," pleads Barr. The incantation of "Root! Root! Root!" briefly surfaces during his speech. It genuinely looks like Wayne Allyn Root's moment. He works the floor, furiously pressing flesh. *Sixteen-year plan. Son of a butcher. Classmates with Obama.*

There's a total of 660 delegates present, well short of the thousand predicted; the winner needs a simple majority (331) to get the nomination. At noon, the carnage begins. The first ballot has eight candidates and brings Barr 153 votes, with Mary Ruwart trailing him by one vote and Root in third place with 123, with Kubby in sixth. Gravel is a distant fourth. Two long-shots have collected less than 5 percent each and are thus cast out. Ron Paul gets six write-in votes.

Everyone takes note that not a single person from Nevada, Wayne Allyn Root's home state, voted for him. "Perhaps they *know* him," deadpans a delegate. The second ballot gets rid of Kubby, who, as expected, endorses Dr. Mary. On the third ballot, Barr and Mary Ruwart, her delegate haul now beefed up with Kubby supporters, are tied with 186 votes each.

The next vote is cast in ominous near-silence. No Libertarian convention had ever gone over three ballots. Even more disturbingly, the total number of voters keeps dwindling. "You know, Libertarians," sighs a California delegate. "Always off doing their own thing." When the results come in, there's a collective gasp. Barr and Dr. Mary are *again* in a tie, with 202 votes each. Gravel is out, and briefly becomes the most popular man in the room—until he professes no intention to endorse anyone and simply leaves.

Wayne Allyn Root's moment has passed; he has 149 delegates and no bequeathals from the now-departed second tier. His only plausible option is to parlay his third place into a vice-presidential nod from Barr, except Libertarians don't let their presidential nominees pick v.p.s at will: There's a separate nomination process. All the same, Root lunges for Barr and buttonholes him in the aisle. Their respective teams briefly form a tight circle enclosing the two men. "Now what?" Root asks Barr, brusquely—and, in the next moment, is brushed away. Shaken and ashen-faced, he storms outside and huddles with his aides, hissing something about Mary Ruwart. He is genuinely hard to look at.

On the fifth ballot, Dr. Mary pulls ahead of Barr, 229 to 223. Revolution is in the air; the room is thrumming with adrenaline. The purists—now comprehensively condensed into Mary's camp—are beginning to grin. So are Root's aides: Now Barr *needs* him and his 165 delegates. Root swallows his pride, walks up to Barr once again, and the two men disappear behind closed doors for about a minute. Pure politics, in miniature, on speed.

At three o'clock, Wayne Allyn Root emerges and gravely announces that he'll be Barr's v.p. His 16-year plan has now mutated into a plan "to spend sixteen years at the side of Bob Barr, learning how to be a successful politician." The purists are in shock: This is their nightmare *arriviste* ticket. A man named Ray jumps on a chair and yells that Barr will destroy the party in two months. The sixth ballot is cast amid criss-crossing chants of "Mary" and "Barr-Root! Barr-Root!" Then it's all over. Barr has 324 delegates, 54 percent of the vote.

Down at the Capitol Bar, Christine Smith is sobbing. "Everything the Libertarian Party stood for is gone," she says. Back in the hall, a few purists stage a desperate drive for Kubby as the v.p. The idea—to stick Barr with the least compatible Number Two—has a perverse, fuck-everything, drive-this-thing-off-a-cliff tinge, but Root squeaks through on the second ballot.

Inside the hall, a hushed pandemonium breaks out. The Libertarian Party seems to be ungluing before my very eyes. After more than a few people loudly declare their intention to defect on the spot, Steve Kubby goes onstage and pleads with them to stay. Boston Tea Party, a fast-swelling offshoot composed of frustrated anarchists, has put together an alternative nominating convention around the corner, for "serious, radical, Libertarians only." Neal, Mike Gravel's Wiccan aide, says he's going to start his own Wiccan-Libertarian caucus back in Michigan. "The values are virtually identical," he says.

Three hours later, in the Barr victory suite, the winner is shaking hands with the Sumerian Libertarian, who he had visibly recoiled from earlier. This is his constituency now. Barr's aide Aleq Boyle is ecstatic: "They let the Georgia cracker in! Yeehaw!" He flicks the rim of his cowboy hat. "I have a feeling this one is going to go *late*. There will be splinter parties in other rooms, womanizing . . . guy-anizing or whatever you call it. You know what to call it. *They* know what to call it!" Around ten p.m., several Gravel and Mary people, their heads down, their pins and buttons largely stripped, make their way into Barr's shindig. The cause is dead. Free beer is free beer.

The last time I see Gravel himself is a few blocks away, with wife Whitney and a few friends. They are mingling at Marlowe's, a bar and grill with a flashing neon martini above the entrance, outdoor seating, and an all-right ribeye. He looks perfectly happy. ◆

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Three A.M. for Feminism

Clinton dead-enders and the crisis in the women's movement.

MICHELLE GOLDBERG

BETTMANN/CORBIS

Amy Siskind, a 42-year-old mother of two from Westchester, stood in a Washington, D.C., park on the last day in May, telling a few hundred cheering people that she would not, under any circumstances, vote for Barack Obama. She was a lifelong Democrat, she said, a donor and a volunteer for the party. But, watching the race with a "mixture of shock, disgrace, and disgust," she was appalled at the leadership's failure to defend Hillary Clinton from the sexism that she believes bolstered Barack Obama's campaign. "Now I have a message for Howard Dean and the DNC," she said into a microphone, acid in her voice. "I'm not your sweetie!"

Siskind was one of the speakers at a rally that brought busloads of people, overwhelmingly women, to demonstrate near the Democratic National Committee (DNC) meeting that would decide the status of the Florida and Michigan delegations. The states had been stripped of their delegates—a decision Clinton endorsed—because they had broken party rules in holding their primaries early. But, as Clinton lost steam, seating them in full became crucial to her argument for the nomination, and thus, to her supporters, a matter of high democratic principle. Oaths to oppose Obama proliferated, often among longtime female fundraisers. "You have betrayed us, our children, and our future," Siskind proclaimed during her speech, "and you will learn the new meaning of stay-at-home moms!"

Hillary Clinton has lost the nomination, but some of her most ardent female backers seem unwilling to accept it. A strange narrative has developed, abetted by Clinton and some of the mainstream feminist organizations. In it, the will of the voters was thwarted by chauvinistic party leaders in concert with a servile media, and Obama's victory represents a repeat of George W. Bush's in 2000. It's a story in which Obama becomes every arrogant young man who has ever edged out a more deserving middle-aged woman, and Clinton, hanging on until the bitter end, is not a spoiler but a feminist martyr.

This conviction, that sexism cost Clinton the nomination, is likely to be one of the more toxic legacies of this primary season. It is leaving her supporters feeling not just disappointed but victimized, many convinced that Obama's win is illegitimate. Taylor Marsh, a blogger and radio host whose website has become a hub for Clinton fans, says she gets hundreds of e-mails from angry Democrats pledging not to vote for Obama. She's started running posts from such readers under the headline DEMOCRATIC STORM WARNINGS. "I'm not saying that this is a huge voting bloc," she says. "I'm just saying that there is a huge amount of talk and I'm convinced it's a reality that needs to be addressed."

Surely some of this political nihilism will fade by November. Right now, it's hard to quantify; Internet forums and political protests exist, in part, to magnify the passions of a few into an illusory groundswell. In exit polls from Indiana and North Carolina, at least half of Clinton supporters said they wouldn't vote for Obama, but there's no way to calculate the role of gender in their disaffection.

In the months to come, feminist leaders and Clinton herself will urge women back into the Democratic fold. Still, the

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bitterness is intense. Kate Michelman, the Obama-supporting former head of NARAL, has heard enough of it to get worried. "It does feel to me, just recently, like we're on a death mission," she says. "[T]here is a danger where we set a course for failure in November."

It didn't start out this way. In February of 2007, Gloria Steinem pushed back against the mushrooming discussion of identity politics, publishing an op-ed in *The New York Times* titled "Right Candidates, Wrong Question." She argued that queries about whether Americans were more prepared to elect a woman or a black man were "dumb and destructive." "[M]ost Americans are smart enough to figure out that a member of a group may or may not represent its interests," she wrote. "This time, we . . . could double our chances by working for one of these candidates, not against the other." When reporters asked if she was supporting Clinton or Obama, she said, "I just say yes."

Eleven months later, her position, and that of many feminists, had grown more rigid. Taking to the *Times* op-ed page once again, she argued, "Gender is probably the most restricting force in American life, whether the question is who must be in the kitchen or who could be in the White House." When the time came to choose a candidate, it turned out identity politics mattered. "We have to be able to say: 'I'm supporting her,'" she concluded, "'because she'll be a great president *and* because she's a woman.'"

Like Steinem, much of the second-wave women's movement would move from enthusiasm for both candidates to dismay and solidarity as Clinton was eclipsed and dismissed. They watched professional media types sing smitten fanboy hymns to Obama and, at the same time, spend hours dissecting Clinton's laugh and cleavage. The prospect of electing a black man clearly thrilled commentators, while the prospect of electing a woman elicited a derisive shrug. For some women, reaction to the coverage was radicalizing.

What's more, seeing Clinton losing to a younger, more charismatic man seemed to echo a primal experience of middle-aged female humiliation. "One can find it in any place of employment," Steinem tells me. "Women who were senior tellers in banks were performing the same work as junior vice presidents. They trained them as they came in at the entry level and then saw them pass upward."

By the spring, the Clinton campaign and the cause of women's rights were joined in the minds of many. Second-wave activists chided Obama-supporting women for not getting on board and began interpreting any attack on Clinton as a slight against their gender. The seating of delegates from Michigan and Florida started to seem like a feminist cause célèbre.

The movement coalesced in mid-May, when members of Clinton's finance committee, including Susie Tompkins Buell, sometimes described as one of Clinton's closest friends, and Allida Black, editor of the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers at George Washington University, formed WomenCount PAC. The group ran full-page advertisements in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and other newspapers addressing the country on behalf of "the women of this nation." The ads proclaimed, rather grandly, "Hillary's voice is OUR voice, and she's speaking for all us." Their story was featured on the "Today" show, "Good Morning America," CNN, and Fox, and they joined other volunteers in organizing the rally at the DNC.

Meanwhile, Clinton, who'd previously avoided presenting herself as the woman's candidate, brought gender to the forefront of her campaign as never before. On May 19, in a *Washington Post* interview, she spoke out for the first time about the sexism she's faced throughout the race, calling it "deeply offensive to millions of women." The press, she suggested, had failed to decry "incredible vitriol that has been engendered by the comments by people who are nothing but misogynists." She began injecting feminist and civil rights language into her arguments for seating the Michigan and Florida delegates. Piously invoking Seneca Falls and Selma in a May 21 speech, she pledged to "carry on this legacy and ensure that in our nominating process every voice is heard and every single vote is counted."

More and more, she was tying her campaign to the grand narrative of women's emancipation. "I am in this race for all the women in their nineties who've told me they were born before women could vote, and they want to live to see a woman in the White House," she wrote in a letter to superdelegates on May 28. "For all the women who are energized for the first time, and voting for the first time. For the little girls—and little boys—whose parents lift them onto their shoulders at our rallies, and whisper in their ears, 'See, you can be anything you want to be.'"

Mainstream feminist organizations joined calls to seat the two states, with leaders of NOW and the Feminist Majority Foundation participating in the rally at the DNC. Some have suggested that the DNC's reluctance was in itself a sign of covert sexism. "There's a strong feeling that this would have been handled differently if Hillary Clinton hadn't won [those] states," says Kim Gandy, president of NOW.

Feminists who supported Obama were incredulous. Harvard Law professor and civil rights activist Lani Guinier suggests that Clinton's supporters were trying to turn her into the Al Gore of 2008. "It appears that some of Hillary's supporters want to externalize the problem, which is why the analogy to 2000 seems to work," she says. "Then they can say it wasn't anything wrong with her candidacy—instead, it was an injustice that was done to women."

The wholesale conflation of Clintonism and establishment feminism—and the merging of their grievances—has created a kind of disorienting parallel reality. But what accounts for this through-the-looking-glass split?

Partly, it's a response to simple longing. The prospect of a female president who is also a feminist would have been a shining triumph for a movement that has lately had more disappointments than successes. "At least in a certain segment of second-wave feminism, the emphasis on getting women in office was always very, very high," says Frances Kissling, former president of Catholics for a Free Choice, now a fellow at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute. "In a certain sense, second-wave feminism is in its old age. . . . For many second-wave leaders who are at the peak of their professional life, or beyond the peak of their professional life, this would seem like such an enormous final victory."

Back in the pre-feminist days of 1934, Malvina Lindsay, the women's page editor of *The Washington Post*, argued that women wouldn't vote for one of their own for president "because they have set too high ideals for their goddesses." Indeed, she wrote, "the woman President that Miss Lillian D. Rock, secretary of the National Association of Women Lawyers, expects to see in the White House within her lifetime will have to be a super-woman to take the hurdle of female appraisal."

Second-wave feminism was supposed to prove Lindsay wrong. One of the central premises of the movement

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was that women had been artificially set against each other, and that, if they could unite behind their common interests, they could revolutionize their roles in the world. In the mid-'70s, elite young women were already pondering who could break the ultimate glass ceiling, and among their candidates was an impassioned young lawyer, Hillary Rodham, deemed an icon of her generation by *Life* magazine after her 1969 Wellesley commencement speech. In his biography of Hillary Clinton, Carl Bernstein describes Betsey Wright, later Bill Clinton's gubernatorial chief of staff, imploring Bill not to marry Hillary, take her off to Arkansas, and thus spoil her chance at becoming the first female president. "I really started in on how he couldn't do that. He shouldn't do that," Wright said. "That he could find anybody he wanted to be a political wife, but we'd … never find anyone like her" to run for office.

For young feminists, who have largely gone for Obama, their first encounter with Hillary came when she defended Bill from charges of philandering during the 1992 presidential campaign; for them, her case for leadership was never clear-cut. But, for many of those who remember Hillary Rodham, her reemergence as a political power in her own right seems a kind of generational redemption. "She's the candidate that I have wanted for decades," says Allida Black. "I had heard about Hillary for a good fifteen years before Bill ran in '92, and I was for Bill because of Hillary."

For these supporters, Clinton's portrayal during the campaign has been anything but inspirational. They say the press has demonized and degraded her, and almost any zealous supporter can reel off a list of journalistic insults. The media is the real target of their rage, while the anger at Obama comes from the sense that he's benefited from it and failed to denounce misogyny the way he does racism.

"We thought we'd gotten past a lot of this stuff, and it turns out that we were deluding ourselves," Black says. "When CNN calls Hillary a white bitch, when they talk about her cleavage, when the metaphor to describe her presentation is, oh, she reminds me of my wife when she's angry and tells me to take out the garbage, or when they *mock* that Hillary has the support of white women … I've been stunned by it. I've been flabbergasted by it." (CNN, of course, did not call Clinton a white bitch. The GOP consultant and McCain adviser Alex Castellanos did, or kind of did, on the network. But the way many Clinton supporters retell it is itself indicative of their distress.)

Of course, Clinton has encountered straight-up misogyny—lots of it. At the same time, anger at obvious instances of sexism has expanded to encompass every setback she's faced, every jab thrown her way—the cut and thrust of any normal campaign. Several of her feminist defenders, for example, interpreted calls for Clinton to drop out, lest she cause a party rift, as expressions of condescending gender bias. "The first woman ever to win a presidential primary is supposed to stop competing, to curtsy and exit stage right," Ellen Malcolm, founder and president of Emily's List, wrote in *The Washington Post* on May 10. But that wasn't anti-woman or even anti-Clinton; it was just Democratic politics. Similar worries were aired about Edward Kennedy in 1980—a *Christian Science Monitor* story claimed his "to-the-bitter-end candidacy already may be irreparably splitting the Democratic Party"—and about Jerry Brown in 1992, once Bill Clinton came near a mathematical lock on the nomination.

Indeed, Clinton has never been just a victim of her gender. When it came to the deeper narratives of the campaign, Clinton benefited, as do many women in politics, from her good fortune of having married a successful political man. Hillary Clinton has spent only four more years than Obama in the Senate, but she was consistently assumed to be a more plausible commander-in-chief than her rival based on her time as First Lady. At the same time, it's been widely assumed that she's been entirely vetted, leaving many parts of her life—her disastrous leadership style on health care reform, her role in trying to silence and discredit Bill's mistresses, her husband's post-White House financial dealings—unexamined. The slimy right-wing rumor mill that tormented the Clintons in the '90s has directed its venom toward Obama: He's the one who has been depicted as a Muslim Manchurian candidate in a smear campaign that has gotten a dispiriting degree of traction.

Obama was probably smart not to bring up more of his opponent's shortcomings; doing so would play into the narrative of victimization that became the dominant theme of Clinton's campaign in its final weeks. "Without question," Susan Estrich, author of *The Case for Hillary Clinton*, wrote in late May, "there is serious disaffection right now among many women about the sense of being shunted aside, told to pipe down and line up, the sense that the Hillary campaign, and Hillary herself, has become a mirror for the frustrations the rest of us have faced as we battle subtle and no[t]-so-subtle discrimination."

This psychic wound is not Obama's fault, but it is his problem. Establishment feminism has not done itself proud using its noble struggle for social justice as an alibi for political hardball. But it represents women whose frustration and sense of unfairness are deeply felt, and those feelings need to be addressed.

For a start, that probably means Obama shouldn't nominate a vice president like Jim Webb, who has a number of attractive attributes but a notably bad record on women's issues. He also needs to stop calling women he doesn't know "sweetie." Beyond that, both feminists who support Obama and those who support Clinton suggest he give a speech about women's issues similar to the one he made about race. One of the things Obama is best at is making people feel that he understands their grievances and anxieties, even if he disagrees with them about remedies. If he can reach out to working-class whites offended by affirmative action, surely he can do the same for the middle-aged women who feel wronged by their surrogate's defeat.

"I do think he could talk more about the contributions that feminism has made to this country, from pay equity to basic respect for women, and, in particular, he should acknowledge the legitimate frustrations of women who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s," says Guinier. "The way you speak to people who are in pain is to acknowledge their pain."

Clinton and her feminist supporters, though, also have work to do, because their rhetoric of disenfranchisement has become destructive—witness the chants, during Clinton's speech on the night Obama won the nomination, urging her to continue on to the convention. It would be the grimmest irony imaginable if feminist irredentism helped elect a candidate as anti-feminist as John McCain. In recent weeks, Clinton has fashioned herself as a standard-bearer for women's rights. Ultimately, her work on behalf of Obama will show whether she means it. ◆

Michelle Goldberg's new book, The Means of Reproduction: Sex, Power and the Future of the World, *will be published in April 2009. It recently won the J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award.*

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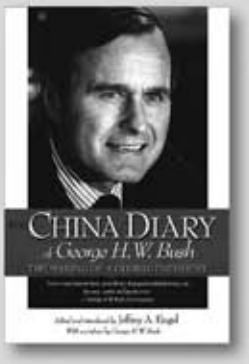

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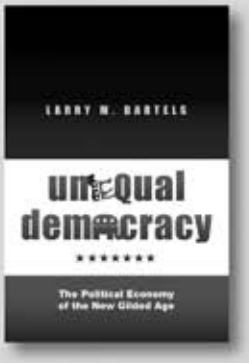

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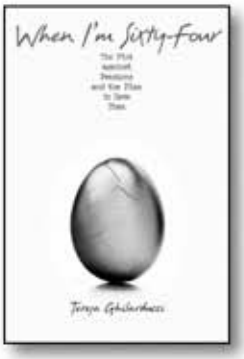

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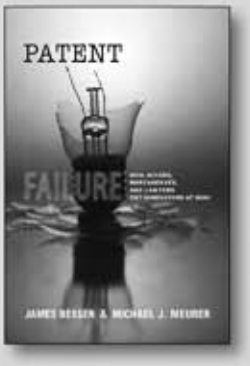

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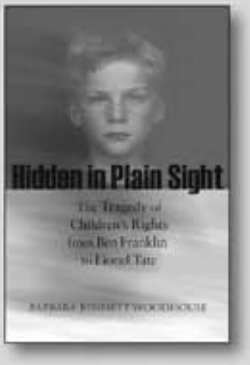

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

ASSORTED PLEASURES

Tolstoy was the source of an earlier Sergei Bodrov film, *Prisoner of the Mountains*, a subtly shaded drama about two Russian soldiers. Bodrov's new film, *Mongol*, could hardly be more different. *Prisoner* was a film that existed as a vehicle for characterization; *Mongol* has just enough characterization to sustain its own reason for being—cinematic fullness.

Here he tells the story of the boyhood and youth and early manhood of Genghis Khan, before the world conqueror acquired that title (he was then called Temudgin). Bodrov, who wrote the screenplay with Arif Aliyev, clearly wanted to revel in all the visual possibilities—extravagances, sometimes—that the story would permit, and he makes the lavish most of them. Some of us occasionally mourn the passing of screen epics that stunned us with size and sweep. Bodrov to the rescue. Possibly with digital help, he packs the screen with the prodigality that we sometimes guiltily miss. What basically gives the picture its particular power is the fact that a highly talented director is having a great time making an old-fashioned picture, certainly with ingenuity and vision but with pleasure in its plenty rather than small-scale finesse.

Oh, there is surface sobriety. Mongol life and customs in the late twelfth century are treated gravely. The boy Temudgin, about nine, is taken by his father to a distant tribe to choose his future bride. On the way, however, they stop overnight with other people, and a local girl called Borte boldly chooses him. He responds, boyishly. His father clucks, but the juvenile engagement lasts through life—through several kinds of life.

The chief pride of these Mongol men is fighting; individual combat and war are their code, their purpose. (The cast breathes fire and cunning.) We see Temudgin as a youth in his first fights and battles, his alliances and enmities; we see the young man glorying even further in his soldiering. His various battles, interwoven neatly with his happy marriage to Borte, are fierce. In one episode, he even spends some time, after capture by an enemy, as a stiff-necked slave. In fact, there is enough action in his life before he becomes Genghis Khan (which we learn only in a closing credit) to fill a film—this one.

One incident has depth beyond the warrior code. Borte is kidnapped by an enemy after her marriage, and by the time Temudgin rescues her, she is pregnant. Unhesitatingly he takes her back, asserting loudly that the child is his, though it may not be. Immediately we think of the moment in John Ford's *The Searchers* when John Wayne rescues Natalie Wood from a tribe that has kidnapped her and almost kills her because she has been defiled. Temudgin is more generous.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Other reminders of Ford abound, as well as reminders of David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*, in the magnificent vistas of riders distant on the steppes, often in the snow. The climax of the picture is an immense battle between Temudgin's army and his half-brother's. (A thunderstorm breaks, pictorially helpful, during the battle.) Olivier's *Henry V* and Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* must also be tucked away in Bodrov's head, and all to the good.

Mongol, like its epic predecessors, is more than principally male: it is a ballad in the poetics of masculinity. (Borte is another version of Penelope, the woman who waits for her man.) It is not just about what men did and do, it is a flight from fact into juvenile fantasy, muscled with adult power. But where sword-slicing pictures often bore quickly, *Mongol* grips us. Bodrov knows so precisely what he is doing and why that we almost feel we are viewing a connoisseur's example of a species.

MONGOL
Picturehouse

THE EDGE OF HEAVEN
Pyramid

WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE YOUR FATHER?
Sony Pictures Classics

The writer-director Fatih Akin was born in Germany of Turkish immigrant parents and takes his cultural situation as his subject. *The Edge of Heaven* follows the lives of Turks (as they still think of themselves) in Bremen and, with those who return, in Istanbul—follows them with comprehension and sporadic surges of pity. Like so many immigrants in so many countries, these Turks are glad of their newfound jobs and comfort, and regretful that they couldn't have had them back home.

Akin's story articulates his theme of cultural contrasts. In Bremen a middle-aged man called Ali visits a prostitute (Turkish), invites her to live with him, and then, in a drunken fit, accidentally kills her. Ali's son Nejat, who is a professor of German in Germany (!), penitently goes to Istanbul to find and help the woman's daughter, Ayten. She, however, is a political radical and has had to flee Turkey—for Germany. There she meets a young German woman, Lotte,

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whose lover she becomes. Matters wind along in vivid cultural colors until finalities and reconciliations.

Each of the people, German or Turk, is thoroughly known to Akin, especially in his or her oddities. But Akin's basic interest in dealing with them is more general than particular. He is constructing a panorama of a modern mixed society that we know about—everyone is aware of the numbers of immigrants and refugees and exiles in the world—but which he wants us to encounter sensorily. He succeeds: all his people seem to step off the screen toward us. He is helped by a redoubtable cast, especially Baki Davrak and Nurgül Yesilçay as Nejat and Ayten. In the relatively small role of Lotte's mother, Hanna Schygulla, who was an eminence in so many Fassbinder films, is lovely.

But the care that Akin expends on his people is skimped in the structure of his screenplay. Accidental meetings and coincidences are overused. Bumps and questions interfere. For instance, the first section of the film concentrates on Ali and the prostitute: the son, Nejat, is peripheral. After Ali kills the woman and goes to jail, Nejat takes over the film until Ayten, whom he is looking for in Istanbul, takes the picture away from him. And we never learn about Ali's sentence for the killing until, after we have nearly forgotten about him, he turns up in Istanbul. Probably he served a term for manslaughter, we must guess.

These reservations are not afterthoughts: they bother a bit while the film is in progress. Despite them, however, we get to spend two hours in the company of some people who exist in variously engaging ways.

A British film called *When Did You Last See Your Father?* affords its own special pleasure. It is quintessentially familiar; yet instead of dampening us with foreknowledge, this fact makes us settle in our seats cozily.

We are told at the start that this is a true story. Evidently, then, life is up to its old trick of imitating art. The screenplay by David Nicholls is based on a book by Blake Morrison, and the thirtyish man in the film is called Blake Morrison. His father, a country doctor, is Arthur Morrison. Right from the start we see that Blake has a complex relationship with Arthur, whom he hates—for dad's overbearing air and velvet-covered ego—at the same time that he can't shake loose of innate filial bondage. Then Arthur comes down with terminal cancer and is bed-bound at home.

Without undue canniness, we can deduce that the film will consist of intertwined flashbacks and present-day moments, through which the father-son relationship will be explored. Even those who have not seen Robert Anderson's *I Never Sang for My Father* or John Mortimer's *A Voyage Round My Father* can foretell the shape of the film as soon as this opening situation is set. The curious point is that, in this case, the expectation is welcome: we know we are going to get a warm run-through of happily conventional emotions. It is like sitting down to a dish that we have enjoyed before, confident that we will enjoy it again.

Blake as boy and youth and man profits from strengths in his father, is hurt by some of his father's behavior, and is shaken by discovering some of his father's flaws. These flashback scenes are poised against moments around the dying father's bed, and all of them coalesce into perceptive portraits of father and son. Pathos soon prevails, of course, less because of the cancer than because of the ruthless torque of time.

What ensures our pleasure is the dialogue, which is supple, and the quality of the acting. Colin Firth plays the mature Blake and proves yet again that his appearance in a role means that all the qualities of the man, hidden and plain, will be affectingly drawn. Jim Broadbent, ever welcome, plays Arthur and, seemingly casually, creates a more than credible man. Broadbent is one of those actors whose name on a film creates a glow before it begins. We can be glad, too, that the excellent Juliet Stevenson plays Arthur's wife: we can only wish that she had more to do.

The director, Anand Tucker, presumably had some effect on the cast's excellence, but with the rest of his work here, Tucker has been artily intrusive. He almost seems to have been embarrassed by the straightforward screenplay and felt that he had to lay on the picturesque in order to deepen it. Instead of presenting the story as simply as it exists, Tucker constantly pans slowly one way or the other or zooms in slowly or shoots past objects large in the foreground or through the backs of chairs. Once again in the history of film, less would have been more. ◆

David Hajdu on Music

I ME MINE

The urge to make the work our own is elemental to the act of encountering art, and we try to satisfy it in many ways. We look at a painting or listen to a piece of music and take it in, hoping that it will prove to be not only an expression of human feeling but also a stimulus to it; we expect art to move us in a personal way. Or we buy the artwork or a copy of it, making our ownership literal (if not always legal, in case of downloading bootleg digital files). Or we wear our esteem for the work like a fashion label, for the social or professional status it confers. Or we draw inspiration from the work and apply it to things we make ourselves, using whatever of it serves our needs. In one way or another, to experience art of any kind is to appropriate it, and to be a devotee of any art or artist is to be a claimant.

In the music world, recording technology has greatly complicated the issues of ownership, authorship, and proprietary rights by simplifying the acquisition of creative property. Since the rise of sampling and downloading, digital technology has transferred many of the privileges of authorship from what was once an elite of professional musicians to the iPod-ed masses. Anyone with a laptop and home mixing software such as GarageBand (a substitute for both the garage and the band) or Pro Tools (an electronic kit to help amateurs sound as if they are not) can put together technically impressive multi-track recordings. To generate the music for those tracks, home producers have for some time now been able to extract snippets from any recordings in the digital domain, doctor them electronically, edit them, and perhaps even use traditional instruments and vocal tracks. The exponential growth in the popularity of such home recording over the past several years has helped fill the pages of MySpace with fragmentary sound-alike songs, while providing countless musical neophytes with gratifying quasi-creative experiences and inflated conceptions of their musical talent. As the record industry burns to ash, record-making is thriving in the same sense that moviemaking, of a sort, is booming on YouTube—that is, in the diminished form of derivative, perfunctory goofing around, the products of which

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may have momentary entertainment value, especially to their creators.

Some rock acts that made their reputations as sonic experimenters a long decade ago, such as Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails, seem humbled in the presence of the shape-shifting creature that popular music has become in the digital age. Both those bands recently made high-profile attempts at Web innovation that are essentially acts of capitulation, if not desperation. Radiohead made lots of news when the band released its first album since 2003, *In Rainbows*, through its website in a plan that allowed downloaders to pay whatever price they chose—a great publicity stunt in the form of a vast, universal tip jar. After too many listeners decided to drop in too few coins, the band released another version of the album, priced conventionally. More recently, Trent Reznor made the new Nine Inch Nails album *The Slip* available through the band's website, for free. In an announcement of the release on his site, Reznor wrote, "thank you for your continued and loyal support over the years—this one's on me." A CD release of *The Slip*, at a price to be determined, will follow in July, at which time Reznor and the latest incarnation of his band will have begun a national tour, for which seats will likely cost at least four or five times the price of a CD.

There is nothing wrong with—or new about—giving away samples to entice customers to pay for other, profitable goods. The technique has long been common in the narcotics trade and in the marketing of supermarket cheeses. More interesting than the fact that Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails have provided albums to listeners for free or for cheap are the efforts that both bands have recently made to come to terms with the phenomenon of home record-making. Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails have each now ventured into "open-source remixing," a growing sphere of digital play in which enthusiasts are granted access to the stems of a song—the individual parts of a multi-track recording, each of which might have, say, the drums or the bass line or a guitar part—in order to manipulate them or add to them at home. In differing ways and to differing degrees, both bands are opening up their processes, making public the component parts of their music to give fans the feeling of collaborating with their idols—shadow-dancing with the rock stars. Through open-source remixing, music fans who might have been just listeners are assuming a kind of ownership which is, on its face, revolutionary, but which is, ultimately, illusory.

Radiohead, in April, made available for purchase through iTunes the five stems, one for each of the five band members' instruments, that make up "Nude," a single from *In Rainbows*. (Side note: in the group's native Britain, more than half of all singles are still released as seven-inch vinyl records, as well as on CD and as downloads; it seems to me that the survival of 45s there has to do with both an English reverence for the tradition that vinyl represents and a frugal English reluctance to throw away perfectly good record players.) With each of the stems going for iTunes's usual per-song price of 99 cents, "Nude" costs five times as much to buy in parts as it costs as a song. This is to be expected. To break anything sellable into bits is to grant each of those bits a value that justifies a price.

"Nude," like several of the songs on *In Rainbows*, is one that fans of the band have long known in multiple earlier incarnations. At concerts in 1998, the tune was a soul ballad framed around the sound of a Hammond organ. By 2005, Thom Yorke was doing the song in solo performances, strumming it gently on the acoustic guitar and murmuring it like an emo navel-gazer. On *In Rainbows*, it opens with a swirling cloud of synth effects and settles into a shuffling

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bass-driven groove. (The terse lyrics center on the phrase "Don't get any big ideas / They're not gonna to happen," a blunt plea to resist the sexual imagination.) A wisp of a piece unaligned to a fixed arrangement, it is suited to remixing; indeed, Radiohead has itself been toying with the song for ten years.

To encourage remixes of "Nude" (and purchases of its stems), Radiohead sponsored a competition and started posting submissions on the band's site. By mid-May, more than 2,200 remixes of the song had been posted and voted on by fans (and, presumably, also automatic-voted on by the digital ringers that hackers can conjure and viral-marketing services can provide for pay). I started listening to the posted remixes (and casting votes, nay and yea, for some of them) shortly after the first went up in April, and over a month's time I got to hear about two hundred versions of "Nude." I did the listening in spurts, taking in a post or two when I felt in the mood, to prevent the repetition of the tune from having the effect of torture.

A great many of the "Nude" remixes I have heard are attempts to change the overall mood of the song by doctoring the tonal colors and redistributing the weights of the musical elements. In a high number of cases, the bass line that dominates the *In Rainbows* version recedes, and new beats of all sorts take over: intricate and realistic-sounding drum patterns are among the easiest things to generate with software such as GarageBand. The gently pulsing waltz pattern of the official release gives way to heavy beats, often in the propulsive 4/4 basic to rock and hip-hop. Since GarageBand can change the time signature, the tempo, or the key of a song with a few mouse clicks, all those features of the composition get transformed in various "Nude" remixes, with results that can only with a snicker be called mixed. Much of the alteration and ornamentation in the "Nude" remixes seem arbitrary, stunty, or inappropriate. In nearly a dozen of the hundred remixes ranked highest on the Radiohead site, fans added keyboard tracks that oversimplified the already simple chords of the tune or simply got the chords wrong. Re-harmonization is not at all uncommon in the realm of interpretive music; but its point is generally to reconsider, rather than to reduce or to misrepresent, the original music.

The way GarageBand works, the process of personalizing music is highly regimented—that is, depersonalized. For each creative decision involved in customizing a track, the software provides a handy drop-down menu of options. What kind of guitar sound would you like, "Arena Rock" or "Glam" or "Clean Jazz"? What sort of vocals, "Female Basic" or "Epic Diva"? The system transforms music-making into shopping, and it provides the same illusion of individual expression that we find in the mall. Now we can make our *sound* in the same way we create our own *look*—by mixing and matching a handful of items from the racks of the same stores that everyone else in America is choosing from. After all, what does "Clean Jazz" mean, other than "Banana Republic"?

Trent Reznor, in a grand gesture of magnanimity, has made the stems of the last several Nine Inch Nails albums (including *White Teeth* from 2005 and *Year Zero* from last year) available for remixing, at no cost, through the NIN site. A longtime hero among rock techheads for the loving noisy artifice of his one-man-band recordings, Reznor is so eager to be aligned with the home-remixing phenomenon that he has sponsored a compilation album of fan remixes of songs from *White Teeth* and *Year Zero*. Called *The Limitless Potential*, the album of twenty-one selections is free for downloading, although the individual stems of the tracks that the fans contributed are not accessible for further remixing through the Nine Inch Nails site. (Evidently the "open" in open-sourcing has its limits.) Most of the Nine Inch Nails remixes posted, like the "Nude" remixes, are efforts to move the songs from one mode—industrial rock, the style Reznor practically invented in the 1980s—to some other style: house music, or psychedelia, or an approximation of funk. The remixes tend to take lateral steps, hopping across category lines from stylistic box to box. They do not, as a rule, try to differ from the originals in point of view or depth or aesthetic value; they seek to differ primarily in *kind*.

Despite its obvious debts to the Web era, home remixing in one sense suggests a return to the musical culture of the days before sound recording on wax cylinders, around the turn of the last century. In their capacity as remixers, members of the musical public are again assuming participatory roles, interpreting compositions at home, much as late Victorians played sheet music in parlor musicales. There is also a social component to both spheres of participation, as remixers post their efforts, listen to one another's, and vote on them. I spent a good part of a weekend making my own remix of "Nude." (For the record, I added some wan obbligato lines on guitar and concocted a vocal counter-melody, which I sang with the essential assistance of a pitch-correction plug-in.) Dissatisfied with the results, I decided not to post them, and I feel as if my remix, as one unposted, is not real in the same way that the worst remixes on the Radiohead website are. In the ballooning community of remixers, as in the rest of the Web universe, to post is to be.

I was further deterred from submitting my remix to the "Nude" competition by the "terms and conditions" of submission. Despite the fact that remixers can not only amend the elements of the Radiohead recording but also add tracks of their own devising—new beats, different chords, additional melodies (such as the admittedly weak guitar and vocal lines I made up), even whole new sets of lyrics (or spoken language)—Radiohead claims full ownership of every part of the remixes sent its way. *Every part*: not just the original stems, but every bit of music anyone might add to a submitted track. The fine print specifies, "All rights in and to any remixed versions ('Remixes') of the song 'Nude' ('the Song') created by the Entrant shall be owned by Warner / Chappell Music Ltd ('WCM') and to the extent necessary the Entrant hereby assigns all rights in the Remixes of the Song to WCM throughout the World for the full life of copyright and any and all extensions and renewals thereof.… Thom Yorke, Jonny Greenwood, Colin Greenwood, Ed O'Brien and Phil Selway will be registered and credited as the sole writers and WCM the publishers of the Remixes of the Song created by the Entrant."

If this is legal, it is also extortionate and an act of terrible hypocrisy—a revocation of the promise of creative ownership that is drawing people to remixing, the promise that Radiohead has been eager to exploit, in large print, to sell its stems. The very idea of remixing implies remaking, and that carries with it a legitimate claim of ownership—aesthetic, ethical, and legal. If most of the remixes on both the "Nude" site and Nine Inch Nails's *Unlimited Potential* album speak unpersuasively for remixing's potential, they are not definitive proof of remixing's limits. For the moment, Yorke and his band have a message for fans loaded

ANTHONY RUSSO

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with GarageBand and an urge to own a part of Radiohead: Don't get any big ideas. They're not going to happen.

But more troubling even than the hypocrisy of a few rock stars is the narcissism at the heart of the phenomenon of home remixing—the notion that to take a work of creative expression and make it "ours" is to improve it. It is a colossal mistake to coerce an expression of others into an expression of ourselves. The premise of open-source remixing is that finally we can admire nobody so much as ourselves. But in music, as in all art and love and politics, there is usually more to gain in trying to understand what belongs, uniquely and idiosyncratically and serendipitously, to somebody else. ◆

Jed Perl on Art

POSTCARDS FROM NOWHERE

I.

When I returned from Los Angeles not long ago, where I had gone to see the new Broad Contemporary Art Museum, friends quite naturally asked for my impressions. The strange thing was that I hardly knew how to respond. And in recent months I have found myself often faced with this problem. I have not had much of anything to say after visiting a number of widely discussed events: the 2008 Whitney Biennial; the opening show at the New Museum of Contemporary Art (aptly titled "Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st Century"); the survey of Japanese artist Takashi Murakami at the Brooklyn Museum; the Olafur Eliasson show at the Museum of Modern Art; the exhibition of Jeff Koons's sculpture on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I have had thoughts, sure; but they are the thoughts of an anthropologist rather than a museumgoer, of a student of the art world rather than a person who has had an encounter with a work of art. What there is to discuss is not visual experiences so much as visual stunts, which are frequently mind-boggling in their size and complexity. Mostly what I can offer, after all this museumgoing and gallerygoing, is a series of postcards about nothing written from places that felt like nowhere.

BROAD CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

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Brooklyn Museum

OLAFUR ELIASSON
Museum of Modern Art

UNMONUMENTAL: THE OBJECT IN THE 21ST CENTURY
New Museum

JEFF KOONS ON THE ROOF
Metropolitan Museum of Art

I gather I am not alone. Reporting on the opening of the Broad Contemporary Art Museum in *Art in America*, Michael Duncan described "a bewildering event, provoking soul-searching in the local art community and the museum world at large." And in the lead article in *Artforum*'s April issue, devoted to "Art and Its Markets," the art historian Thomas Crow complained of trustees reneging on public trusts, of "barbarism" in cultural institutions, of "vandals … inside the walls." Well, yes. Then again, I find it interesting that many commentators are far more eager to criticize the collectors and the dealers than the art stars who produce this junk in the first place. Can it be that even the most vapid machine-tooled work is still covered by the old romantic alibi, namely that the muses made me do it? The woes of the art world cannot be blamed entirely on the rapacity of a cadre of collectors, dealers, and curators. After all, it was an artist, Damien Hirst, who dreamed up the platinum replica of a human skull, paved with diamonds, that was first exhibited last year in London in a show called "Beyond Belief."

It is the artists, and a certain line of thinking about art, that have given the people with the cash permission to buy and sell what amounts to nothing, and to do so for ever larger and more insane sums of money. All this sensational commerce is fueled by the anti-aesthetics that were born nearly a century ago among the Dadaists, and have by now morphed into the laissez-faire aesthetics that give collectors sanction to regard one of Jeff Koons's stainless-steel balloon animals as simultaneously a camp joke and a modern equivalent of a Tang dynasty horse. (A critic in *The New York Times* described one of these glistening metal doggies, currently on display on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as a "masterpiece.") The artists involved—beginning with Duchamp and including Rauschenberg, Warhol, Salle, and Koons—celebrate, or toy with, a number of apparently contradictory thoughts: that art is nothing; that art can be anything; that randomness and order are the same thing; that art has no particular place in the world; that art can be found anyplace in the world; that art is just another commercial product, like tennis balls and washing machines.

I am well aware that these artists know how to produce work that is sporadically elegant, ingenious, and charming. They are not stupid men, not by a long shot. Some of them might be accurately described as dandies and aesthetes, and these are perfectly reasonable things for an artist to be. Nobody can deny that Warhol put a personal stamp on his movie stars and supermarket products. David Salle will tell you that his juxtapositions are no more anti-aesthetic than those of an Old Master such as Caravaggio. Nevertheless, all these artists, in one way or another, are at war with the idea that a work of art establishes a free-standing universe. While their lines of attack are more or less subtle, the result is ultimately the same: they replace the *there* that constitutes a work of art with a *nowhere*.

It is important to point out that nothing and nowhere are themselves significant artistic themes. De Kooning in the 1950s liked to say that he was painting New York's "no-environment." What is often forgotten today is that painting no place, as de Kooning did in his greatest canvases, from *Excavation* to *Gotham News*, actually requires an acute sense of place. A painting or a sculpture, whether abstract or representational, must always be a place—a unique locale, a little universe. The particularity of the place draws us in. We focus our attention, we linger, we explore. Yet once you have accepted Duchamp's displacement of the work of art with the Readymade—that is, with anything—you can't go home again.

If a work of art can be anything or nothing, then the place where we look at it is also under threat. This helps to explain the poorly defined character of so many new museums and galleries. These exhibition spaces, whether the Broad Contemporary Art Museum in Los Angeles or the New Museum in New York, are as incoherent as the art they have been designed to house. They are bland, generic warehouse-style spaces—

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places to dump expensive stuff. And the new style in exhibition design, especially at the Whitney Biennial, favors a chocka-block look, with works set in front of one another so that nothing can be experienced in and of itself. Is it any surprise that, after decades in which aesthetic contemplation and the idea of the free-standing work of art have been under attack, the people who design museums have not a clue how to arrange an exhibition space?

Time and again, when I visit museums and galleries, I feel as if I am surveying a display of trophies, works that have about as much relationship to artistic experience as a silver-plated cup on a shelf has to a champion athlete's leap from the diving board. The opening of the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM) was accompanied by the installation of a new work by Chris Burden just off Wilshire Boulevard, an arrangement of more than two hundred vintage street lamps—urban archaeology as a nouveau-retro light show. At the same time Michael Govan, the director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), of which BCAM is a part, announced plans for yet another gigantic sculpture by Koons, a seventy-foot-long replica of a 1940s locomotive that will be suspended from a 161-foot-tall crane, the point of this mostly being to create something that will be visible from much of Los Angeles, rather like the Hollywood sign.

Some of the most widely discussed contemporary artists appear to be as gaga over their big cars and trucks and trains as five-year-olds with their little cars and trucks and trains. Charles Ray's forty-six-foot-long *Firetruck*, which was parked on Madison Avenue as part of the Whitney Biennial in 1993, is now parked at LACMA. At the Guggenheim in New York, there might as well be a new rule that you cannot have a retrospective without putting a car in the rotunda. Richard Prince had a sculpture of a car hood in his show there last year, and this winter the Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang suspended a bunch of cars from the ceiling, with flashing lights projecting from them to suggest exploding bombs. In Chelsea, another Chinese artist, Zhang Huan, with back-to-back shows at PaceWildenstein's spaces on West 22nd and West 25th Streets, had a fleet of pedicabs to take you from one exhibit to the other, emblazoned with advertisements for the gallery and the show. Asked by one of the young hipsters doing the pedaling if I wanted a ride, I replied that I would rather not feel beholden to PaceWildenstein and walked out into the rainy afternoon.

II.

The king-sized egos of businessmen who take an interest in culture are not new. Andrew Carnegie was stamping his name all over buildings long before Eli Broad was born, and Broad is not the first person to have his name on a building at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. What has raised alarms in the cultural world is the degree to which Broad is seen as driving the agenda at LACMA. He donated the $56 million for the new building, designed by Renzo Piano, and had more of a hand in shaping the plans than any single trustee should. Then, just as BCAM was opening, he announced that most of the art on display in the building would remain the property of the Broad Art Foundation, on loan to LACMA.

Installation view, Broad Contemporary Art Museum, 2008

COURTESY MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

This was widely reported to be an embarrassment for the museum, and for its relatively new director Michael Govan, whose ability to shape the expanding LACMA campus is quite naturally seen as a test of his leadership.

The only mystery here is why anybody ever imagined that Govan would be able to control a billionaire trustee. After all, Govan's career has been based on accommodating the whims of such people, a talent he acquired while working for former Guggenheim director Thomas Krens, that master of the Art of the Deal. So far as I can see, Broad is merely another steamroller personality for Govan to cheer on. Both Broad and Govan have what amounts to an ideological aversion to institution building and collection development and exhibition planning, at least insofar as they represent an effort to provide a public forum for the essentially private experience of looking at a work of art. If there is a sense in which BCAM is a public gesture, even a civic gesture, all that it gestures toward are the peaks and the valleys of the art market. And that, come to think of it, puts Broad and Govan on the same page with many of the artists represented at BCAM, especially Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons, for whom the idea is not so much to make art as to make money, money being the only sure value in a post-Dadaist culture, or so they believe.

The old assumption that artists and art institutions can come together in an effort to bridge the distance between private feeling and public experience has been replaced by an avidity for logos and labels and brands. Eli Broad with his billions and Michael Govan with his matinee-idol looks (that's the first thing anybody says about him) are the men charged, at least this season, with setting up what in the business world would be called a new platform, so that distribution can roll. Broad does not present art, he places products. There are galleries at BCAM, especially the ones dedicated to work fashionable in the 1980s, that look as dated as the fashion magazines of the period. Broad is not a man with a sensibility, he is a man who buys whatever the happening galleries—perhaps Mary Boone and Metro Pictures back then, certainly Gagosian today—happen to be selling. BCAM is about high-end shopping. When I say that the only works that struck me as having a poetic power

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were two early paintings by Cy Twombly, all I am really divulging is that the museum has accomplished its goal, for visual expression is certainly not what BCAM is about.

Actually, you do not have to go to BCAM to know what it is about. All you have to do is drive down the Los Angeles boulevards and note the banners advertising the museum, which bear reproductions of Jeff Koons's broken egg in bright red high chromium stainless steel. It is the perfect logo for the newly hatched museum. Broad bought this Koons not too long ago from the Gagosian Gallery, and when I saw the use to which it had been turned in Los Angeles, I had to acknowledge that Koons has concocted what is, in its own way, a striking thing: crisply executed, succinct, rather funny. Like most of what fills BCAM, Koons's *Cracked Egg (Red)* is a matter of design rather than of art. And what, pray tell, is the difference? I thought I might find the answer in the writings of a great designer, so I took Paul Rand's *A Designer's Art* off the shelf. Rand, who dreamed up some legendary logos for IBM, UPS, ABC, and Westinghouse, says that "the designer's problems are twofold: to anticipate the spectator's reactions and to meet his own aesthetic needs." While I will leave Koons's aesthetic needs for others to ponder, there is no question that he and Hirst and many of the other artists whose work I have seen in recent months are cunningly anticipating the spectator's reactions.

Koons and his kind have never been interested in the old avant-garde idea of outraging the bourgeoisie, of shaking up expectations. The possibility that a work of art can disturb us, whether through its style or its content, is at heart a rather traditional possibility, a new twist on the complex emotional exchanges that have gone on between artists and audiences from time immemorial. Koons is mostly concerned with massaging the egos of gallerygoers and museumgoers—and, of course, high-end collectors. He knows how to cozy up to his constituency. Those of us who are outraged that Koons and Hirst and Murakami now take up so much space in our museums are not angered by their work. We are angered by the significance that arts professionals are attaching to this work. There is no art here to enrage me—or to engage me, either.

Artists often say, about the works of art they love, that you have to see them "in the flesh" in order to understand them. In the case of Takashi Murakami—whose retrospective was organized at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and is now at the Brooklyn Museum—you cannot possibly understand what a safe haven for frauds and con artists the art world has become until you have walked into this trickster's trap. Murakami, who produces figurines that are sold inexpensively in Japan, as well as very expensive Louis Vuitton handbags and exceedingly expensive paintings and sculptures, is a canny observer of consumer desires. It is easy to appreciate how niftily some of his effects are engineered. A new high (or low, depending on your point of view) in aggressive kitsch was reached in 1998, when Murakami created *My Lonesome Cowboy*, a sculpture of a skinny naked boy with flying yellow hair, an erect penis, and an ejaculation so powerful that the thing becomes a twirling lasso, circling his head. From time to time Murakami demonstrates a certain design sense. His compositions with lots of eyeballs have a freaky dynamism; and his melting and transmogrifying sci-fi humanoids, which mingle Surrealist strategies with a psychedelic Peter Max sensibility, are sporadically diverting. But the work is all shell, all façade, all empty assertion.

The organizers of the Murakami show make no bones that the artist is in the business of producing logos and products.

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To begin with, the show is called "© Murakami." And it comes with a real live Louis Vuitton boutique, complete with sleekly dressed salespeople and a shimmering cash register, situated right smack in the middle of everything. Those who defend Murakami—and Koons and Hirst—may want to argue that what we have here is nothing more than a new version of the old search for a personal style. Some may even argue that Mondrian's primary colors and right angles are no less a look, a logo, than Koons's shiny chromium surfaces and curvaceous forms. The difference is that for Mondrian a style is a dynamic principle, not a fixed attitude. (I cannot believe that I must make a distinction between Mondrian and Koons, but this is where we are.) An artist's style is a vocabulary, the medium through which something is expressed. The more expressive the artist becomes, the richer the possibilities of that vocabulary turn out to be. To the extent that Koons or Murakami can be said to have a style, it is a frozen style, an inert vocabulary.

III.

If the designs of the New Museum on the Bowery in Manhattan and the Broad Contemporary Art Museum are any indication, the architects who are getting the commissions to design these exhibition spaces are as fixated on logos as the artists whose work is on display inside them. Is there anything that stays in the mind about the New Museum aside from the oddly stacked volumes that make up the building's profile as you see it from various spots on the Lower East Side? That's the museum's logo. The same can be said for the red steel beams at BCAM, which protrude from the building's basically boxy structure and are arranged to create a sort of jungle gym around the entrance.

Once you have noted those oddly stacked volumes and those bright red beams, the stories that these buildings tell are over—there is nothing more to see. Many admirers of Renzo Piano cannot quite believe what has become of the creator of the Menil Collection in Houston, that most exquisite of museums; all they can do is lamely praise the skylights on the top floor of BCAM and then change the subject. Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, who designed the New Museum, also have their fans. Neither building, however, has a meaningful entrance or lobby; there is no sense of a progression from outside or inside, or indeed from gallery to gallery, as Sarah Williams Goldhagen observed about the New Museum in these pages a few weeks ago ("Stopped Making Sense," May 11). Discussing such museums in architectural terms is like discussing a sculpture by Jeff Koons in compositional terms. You would be kidding yourself. These museum are only brands designed to contain brands.

The generic spaces created to display contemporary art, which are often said to embody a new unfinished-finished style in architectural design, are basically big-box stores: cubic footage to be filled with stuff. Whatever happened to the belief that a museum ought to be a unique space that contains unique objects? Donald Judd understood that his one hundred mill aluminum boxes, arranged in two huge buildings at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, are a singular monument, a particular experience that you can have only in a particular place; but the people who run many of the contemporary art museums would probably be nervous about an experience that was so utterly unique. They are uncertain about their own taste. They want to give the public a dependable experience, which means an experience that has already been market-tested in other museums and galleries—and in the auction rooms. Richard Serra is a brilliant artist, and his immense, snaking steel sculptures are eye-opening, at least the first or second or third time you see them. By now, though, they are almost a joke, the rusty steel logo that is de rigueur for any museum that wants to prove that it is in the major league. The differences between these works are not great enough to keep them from being as repetitious as the chain stores in the malls across America. Serra, too, has become a chain. I could explain why I think one of the two Serras at BCAM is better than the other, but the only thing that really matters is that Eli Broad, being a very important guy, has both of them.

Exhibitions are now treated as if they were colonial occupations. Self-respecting artists do not just expect to have a show in a gallery or a museum, they hope to have the entire interior gutted and rearranged to accommodate them. What mostly registers at the Murakami exhibition is how many rooms the show exhausts on two floors of the Brooklyn Museum, and the fact that some of the rooms do not contain very much only adds to the sense that the guy is really major. (I am reminded of throne rooms in baroque palaces, with their mind-numbing square footage.) At BCAM, the only interesting game is guessing which artists will cop the most space. Cindy Sherman is represented by more than three dozen of her photographic self-portraits, and that in itself makes her a winner. Damien Hirst, lucky boy, has two whole rooms.

Installation view of © MURAKAMI, Brooklyn Museum, 2008

PHOTO BY GION, COURTESY ©TAKASHI MURAKAMI/KAIKAI KIKI CO., LTD.

Meanwhile, back in New York, Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim rotunda, the miraculous interior that in the good old days of modernism was often said to be a mediocre museum space, has emerged as the *kunsthalle* that logo-mad artists love. For Matthew Barney, Richard Prince, and now Cai Guo-Qiang, having a retrospective at the Guggenheim is like being a Visigoth who has been given the keys to Rome. At the Guggenheim, the

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staff no longer curates exhibitions. They simply invite an artist to come in and rape the place. (The institutional superego sees to it that in some remote gallery there is a small exhibition that modestly, and guiltily, salutes the museum's original mission. This time, along with Cai Guo-Qiang's follies, there is an exquisite show devoted to Karl Nierendorf, the legendary dealer who in the 1930s and 1940s acquired many of the modern masterworks that are now in the Guggenheim's permanent collection.)

Even the Museum of Modern Art is taking a do-with-me-what-you-will approach to curating. The Scandinavian conceptualist artist Olafur Eliasson, the subject of a retrospective there called "Take Your Time," has been allowed to occupy various areas around the museum, so that his show functions as a series of interventions (and continues at P.S.1, MoMA's outpost in Long Island City). In the main atrium at MoMA you will find *Ventilator*, in which a single small fan swings from the ceiling as museumgoers watch their kids race around; in one corridor there are lights that turn the space a deep yellow; another room contains a work called *I only see things when they move*, with a contraption that casts bands of colors across the walls. Like Murakami and Koons, Eliasson works on a scale engineered for the international exhibition circuit, in which overwhelming people is the only way of affecting people. The difference is that Eliasson's particular brand of belligerent glamour has an austerity that is to MoMA's liking. I suppose you could say that he is a better-mannered megalomaniac than Koons or Hirst or Murakami.

The anthropologist in me remains fascinated by the spectacle of MoMA, this grand dame of modernism, as it tries on all the new party dresses. They like to point out that the new party dresses are not entirely different from the old ones; this is what passes for scholarly probity. As an accompaniment to the Eliasson show, the Modern offers a brief survey of kinetic light effects in twentieth-century art, beginning more or less with Moholy-Nagy. Eliasson, so we are being told, is in the Great Tradition, or at least in some tradition or other.

The Museum of Modern Art's institutional memory is not entirely dead. Unfortunately, most of what seems to be remembered is the modern-art-can-be-funky-fun attitude that was popular at the museum in the 1960s and 1970s. I keep seeing things at MoMA that remind me of the show that Pontus Hulten was brought in to organize there in 1968, "The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age," which ranged from Leonardo drawings to work by the pioneering video artist Nam June Paik. It was high-level intellectual slumming. This winter's "Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today," organized by Ann Temkin, was clever in a Pontus Hulten sort of way. The idea that standardized mass-produced color has replaced the mixed colors of the painter's palette does help to explain the power of certain works by Ellsworth Kelly and Donald Judd, but as a theme for a major exhibition it quickly deteriorated into a MoMA-friendly mixture of the tendentious and the cute. Although it is not clear what unites all these works that happen to use pre-mixed colors, at least Temkin had the wit to insist on a formal idea, which is unusual nowadays.

MoMA feels better today than right after it reopened. Cézanne's *Bather* has been returned to its central place at the beginning of the permanent collection, and Mondrian has once again been given a room of his own. These are not matters of blind obeisance to the past, for the reaffirmation of the old choices is a reaffirmation of enduring ideas. To the extent that the museum feels a tiny bit more the way it used to feel, the people in charge are honoring a sense of

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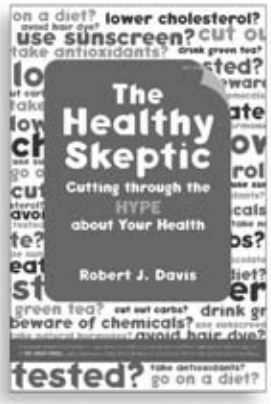

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place, honoring the sense that the Modern was, for generations, The Place. And in doing so, they are reminding us that the sense of place is inextricably associated with the sense of memory—and with aesthetic value. After seeing the New Museum and BCAM, I find myself again warming to Taniguchi's building. The entrance, with the dark staircase to the right and the Sculpture Garden beckoning, has a whisper of pageantry; the details of doorways and railings have a lovely clarity; the atrium, though turned into a dumb-ass playpen by Eliasson, pulls together the disparate parts of the museum; and one long vertical aperture high up in the atrium, offering a glimpse of a staircase in the permanent collection, begins to feel endearingly inevitable, like those quirky windows on the façade of Marcel Breuer's Whitney.

IV.

The trophy-art economy is a global phenomenon. Walking through the Murakami show at the Brooklyn Museum or looking at the work by Serra and Warhol and Hirst and Koons at BCAM, you do not get the feeling that a curator has left a mark. Though there is more of Ed Ruscha and John Baldessari, southern California's favorite sons, at BCAM than there would be in a comparable show of contemporary art on the East Coast, the rest of it is one-from-column-A-and-one-from-column-B collecting. And why shouldn't this be the case, when we consider that Koons and Hirst and Murakami and the other hot artists of today are engaged in what amounts to one-from-column-A-and-one-from-column-B art production?

The claim is often made that the impersonality of much contemporary art reflects a sea change in the human condition. Like it or not, some will say, we are living in an increasingly interconnected and homogenized technological world, and this world demands a new, streamlined kind of art. Speaking at a press conference at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the day his show opened there, Jeff Koons explained that the chromium surfaces of his new works are quite simply the characteristic surfaces of our time. These shimmering finishes, so he said, are the mark of our modernity, much as the polished marble surfaces of the statues in the Greek and Roman galleries were the characteristic surfaces of their time. Although the sun was shining on the roof of the Metropolitan as Koons gave his brief speech, it was a dark day indeed when one of the greatest museums in the world permitted this media hack to define tradition downward.

Our technologically driven age gets the art it deserves. This is the argument that the all's-right-in-the-culture punditocracy will want to make. Interestingly, though, the argument has received a good deal of criticism. Much of the work in the New Museum's opening "Unmonumental" exhibition and in the Whitney Biennial was self-consciously low-tech, reflecting the resurgence of a grungy, collagist, do-it-yourself sensibility. Marc André Robinson's heap of distressed wooden chairs at the New Museum had the friendly insouciance that found objects can have, although here, as with many works in this show, I was left wondering if the effect was any more charming than that of some particularly odd heap of trash that I might glimpse on a Manhattan sidewalk. Still, there can be something gladdening about a casually tossed together piece of work. Heather Rowe's environmental construction at the Whitney Biennial, a lumberyard maze in which one's image appeared and disappeared in the slim vertical slits of mirror, was an amusement-park attraction for narcissistic adults.

Generally I prefer my Dadaist nonsense to be low-tech rather than high-tech, although Tony Feher's show at PaceWildenstein in April, with its coat hangers and odd bits of plastic, did begin to cross the line from nothing much to nothing at all. While I find Rauschenberg's early Combines, which are nowadays hailed as masterpieces of classical structure, to be stupid and incoherent, I understand that some younger artists see warmth there, at least compared to Warhol's ice-water heart. And as the all-around guru of this casual-is-cool movement there will always be Richard Tuttle, who can tease lyricism out of bits of string and wire and Styrofoam. Yet the charm of Tuttle's work, authentic as it is, does not excuse the critics who write about a funky poetic comedian as if he were a master for the ages. Could it be that many artists and critics are actually embarrassed by contemporary painters and sculptors who still want to craft something sturdy and substantial, with their own two hands?

Funkiness—a playful, insouciant elegance—is a good thing. Although it is not enough to make a resolved work of art, it is a beginning. And it is this feeling for imaginative play that held me at Ry Fyan's first one-man show, at Perry Rubenstein in March. Working in oil and acrylic and enamel, often on wood supports, Fyan brings a stream-of-consciousness freedom to his surfaces, mingling teensy pictures of ordinary objects (a Vicks NyQuil bottle, a roll of Bounty paper towels, a bottle of Dawn detergent) with fantasy landscapes. Sometimes he seems to lose the narrative thread and just enjoys playing with the paint, building up trippy patterns and then rubbing them away, exposing the wood support. There is a jungle painting and another one with pyramids, but it was not the overall iconography that held me so much as the obsessive details and the pile-up of those painterly divertissements. I was reminded of some of the paintings that Carroll Dunham did in the 1980s on sheets of wood veneer, with their witty capriccios and arabesques—a little hailstorm of multicolored O's, a lovely passage of art nouveau patterning. Dunham's early paintings were the subject of a show at the Skarstedt Gallery in March; there is also one up at MoMA this spring. When I first saw those Dunhams I admired many of the individual elements, especially the way he used paint and pencil to riff on the grain in the wood veneer, but I did not think the paintings cohered—and Fyan's work leaves me engaged in a similarly open-ended way.

Surely we are in a period when the sense of place as a sense of classical order is almost impossible to maintain. The fluid, the improvisational, the changeable, the ambiguous preoccupy most of the best artists right now. The Impressionists' shifting light and the Cubists' labyrinthine spaces and the Surrealists' paradoxical narratives are about as much of a homeland as contemporary artists can expect to possess. At the New Museum, where the big assemblages of "Unmonumental" were accompanied by a show of collages called "The Un-Monumental Picture," I did not see much of anything that I would regard as a fully resolved work of art, and yet the yearning to reclaim Surrealism as a modern sense of place was palpable. The work of Kim Jones and Henrik Olesen and some others put me in mind of Jess, the San Francisco artist who died a decade ago and who was the subject of a show at the Paule Anglim Gallery in San Francisco in February and a show currently at Tibor de Nagy in New York.

ANTHONY RUSSO

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Jess's vast collages, with their images clipped from magazines and their mingling of the contemporary and the classical, have an openness and a quirky erudition that has considerable appeal right now. I can see younger artists responding to Jess's willful, idiosyncratic imagination. What may be harder for them to grasp is the pictorial logic that he assimilated as a student of Abstract Expressionism around 1950. It is that old modern sense of form that enabled him, in a number of his oil paintings—especially *The Enamord Mage*, a portrait of his life partner, the poet Robert Duncan—to construct an imaginative world that is entirely his own: an impossibly rich and resplendent world, with its bejeweled colors and surfaces and jugendstil intricacies and literary conceits.

One of Jess's phantasmagorical landscapes, *Ex 7 Zodiacal Light*, came up for auction in London in February. It was from the collection of an old friend of Jess's, the painter R. B. Kitaj, who died last fall. Recently the Marlborough Gallery in New York presented Kitaj's last works, a cycle of small paintings at once dense and telegraphic, a quickening tour through his luxuriant iconography, with portraits and memories and jokes presented with streaming, peremptory ease. Beginning in the 1960s as a Pop Artist of sorts, Kitaj proceeded to work his way back into tradition, in the 1970s teaching himself how to draw with an acuity that brings Degas to mind, and in the 1980s and 1990s using this hard-won graphic freedom to create a body of work that has the density of a private emblem book projected onto a painter's public scale. Kitaj published two volumes of writing reflecting on his experiences in the studio, which he called his *Diasporist Manifestos*. The first of these is perhaps the most original of all recent efforts to describe the artist's sense of place. "Paintings sit there," Kitaj writes, "looking out at the world, which remains separate. I'm for an art into which the painter imports things from the world that he cares about"—imports them into the alternate world that is the work of art. "Painting," Kitaj explains, "is a great idea I carry from place to place. It is an idea full of ideas, like a refugee's suitcase, a portable Ark of the Covenant."

The artist's sense of place is the stranger's sense of place, the outsider's sense of place. Such a dispensation can feel expansive and inviting. It can also feel exclusionary, because its particularities push out other particularities. An art that pursues its own viewpoint, and does so unironically, can seem elitist, because it propounds a secret. "This is just for us," the work declares—but it is always the case that the "us" includes anybody who can imagine himself or herself into this particular place. Anybody can enter, but not without making an effort.

V.

A work of art—any work of art—is a particularity. The trouble with so much of the work at BCAM and the other contemporary art extravaganzas is that it trades in generalities that are passed off as universalities. I do not really believe that the educated audience that surveys the work of Koons at BCAM and the Metropolitan, or the work of Murakami at the Brooklyn Museum, sees some deep meaning in these overblown comic-book heroes and factory-produced baubles. A lot of the visitors to these shows have a knowing, ironic look fixed on their faces. They can see that what is presented as art with a universalist message is really just global marketing swill—but these trumped-up universalities have a way of eclipsing everything else. When I went to Brooklyn

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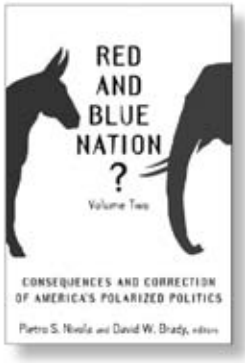

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to see the Murakami show, I discovered that the museum's great collection of European paintings was closed due to renovations, at least until the fall. There was room for endless Murakamis, but not for one painting by Degas or Corot or Cézanne.

In Los Angeles, the media storm surrounding BCAM has almost entirely erased the infinitely more important story at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art—which is that this museum that has had a chip on its shoulder practically forever in fact has a very fine permanent collection. Michael Govan's best move has been to borrow Tony Smith's twenty-two-foot-high *Smoke*, an agile behemoth of a sculpture that gives much-needed focus to the atrium of the Ahmanson Building, where the lion's share of LACMA's permanent collection is beautifully installed. Eli Broad may have decided not to give his puerile toys to LACMA, but in the meantime the museum has acquired the Lazarof Collection, with its riches in Picasso and Giacometti, which are given a striking yet intimate presentation; and upstairs the permanent collection looks absolutely terrific. In the Ahmanson Building I felt precisely what is missing at BCAM, which is a sense that the works on display have been acquired one by one, that they have been loved for what they are. These works come from many times and many places, and they have somehow all found their way to Wilshire Boulevard, refugees in the sense that Kitaj believed that every work of art is a refugee, but now at home in Los Angeles, a city to which people have for generations been coming from many other places.

I WISH MORE museum directors and trustees understood how hungry—and how disgruntled—museumgoers in America really are. Again and again, people are pointed in precisely the wrong direction. It is depressing to think how many people have visited LACMA in recent months to see BCAM without sparing a minute for the Ahmanson Building. They literally do not know what they are missing. From Los Angeles I went up to San Francisco, and it is more or less the same story. Everybody rushes to the Museum of Modern Art and the De Young, two overblown buildings with sporadically important collections, while the most beautiful museum in the city—the Legion of Honor, in which masterpieces by Watteau, Le Nain, and Seurat have been given a thrillingly elegant installation—is hardly ever mentioned.

Shortly after returning to New York, I went down to Philadelphia to visit the Barnes Foundation, a sacred place for anybody who loves modern art. And the news there is bad as well, for most likely the Barnes will soon be torn out of its historic home in suburban Merion and reconstituted as part of a projected museum district in downtown Philadelphia. I wish that the cultural commissars who now control the Barnes's financial future and believe that the downtown move is a favor to the public would take another look at the way visitors are responding to the collection in its present location. What a thrill it is to see how vigorously museumgoers engage with this most personal of installations, where the world's greatest collection of Cézannes and key works by Seurat and Matisse and Renoir are brilliantly juxtaposed with pieces of Pennsylvania German ironwork and paintings by El Greco and the Venetians and sculpture from Africa. When I was there, everybody looked keyed up—they looked happy, the way nobody looks at BCAM.

The Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania is a somewhere, make no mistake about it. Matisse, who visited the foundation when he was in America, painted one of his most deeply pondered murals, *The Dance*, for the central gallery, shaping his monumental figures to fit the curiously curved spaces above the three huge windows. To see this seminal work by Matisse in the room for which it was intended, hard by Cézanne's greatest *Card Players* and Seurat's *Models*, is one of the essential experiences that a museumgoer can have in the United States. Nothing could be more magnificently particular than this museum on a quiet street in a Philadelphia suburb. It is a monument to modern art, and to the reception of modern art in America. And yet there are people—powerful people—who want to depersonalize this most personal of places. Only bureaucrats who have become inured to a world in which works of art are nothings and museums of art are nowheres could consider such a plan. But this is where we are today. Before I left the Barnes I went down to the shop and bought a few postcards. I am looking at one of those postcards now, of the wall in the main gallery with the Cézanne *Card Players* and Seurat's *Models* and three other Cézannes and a Corot and a number of pieces of early American metalwork. *This* is a postcard from somewhere. ◆

John Clare's Finches

I thought the first one was a leaf falling faster
Than any leaf could fall—no coasting the updrafts,
None of those sinuous floating undulations

That body forth the longing of anything falling
To return to the branch—and then it dipped and stalled
And touched its featherweight of gold to the fencepost,

And there we were, risen at dawn to breathe while we could
The vanishing cool of early late summer morning
And see the goldfinches should they chance to return—

And they came, but on a wind that never blew before:
I saw as in a rain-pool slicking the roadway
Or a shard of mirror lodged in a Romany's tree

The poor marvelous daft poet limping his way
Along the watery English lanes and by-lanes,
Humming the air of Highland Mary, dreaming his aim

Was taking him close and closer to remembered beauty—
Daisy, goldfinch, grass that smells of the baker's oven—
Who might have wrapped around him her arms long and small

Had she managed to breathe the air of his belief
And not die blameless and alone, sister to nothing
Or the bride of darkness, for all the difference it makes.

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Jerome Groopman

GENES AND IDENTITIES

JACOB'S LEGACY:
A GENETIC VIEW OF JEWISH HISTORY
By David B. Goldstein
(Yale University Press, 148 pp., $26)

Early in my career as a specialist in blood diseases and cancer, I cared for a middle-aged man who had melanoma. The cancer had spread from an early lesion on his trunk to his lungs, liver, and bones. He was a successful businessman, intelligent and outgoing, with a sharp sense of humor. Through the course of his treatment, we developed a warm relationship, and he made it clear that, when the end came, he wanted to be at home. As that time approached, he asked if I might see him one last time.

And so, on a spring evening, I drove west to Sherborn, Massachusetts. His home was of a stately Georgian design, and there were stables with horses grazing in a nearby meadow. Along the staircase to his third-floor bedroom was a series of portraits of his forebears. The picture at the base of the stairs was of his father, a stern-looking gentleman who had the features of Calvin Coolidge. The portraits were hung in chronological order, and at the apex of the staircase was a painting, more than two hundred years old, of the founding member of the family. I learned later that he was among the first settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

I found him weak but lucid. He told me that he felt some comfort in knowing that his children would soon hang his portrait in the ancestral home. As I read David B. Goldstein's important and illuminating book—written with keen intelligence and deep love of its subject, without sacrificing scientific accuracy for the sake of tribal nostalgia—my memory of my visit to my patient and his ancestors unexpectedly returned. I thought again about him, what kind of person he was and what he had accomplished, and how much of his character and behavior could have been a legacy of his long lineage. And perhaps I thought of him because, like most Jews I know, I have no such portrait gallery of my forebears. My paternal grandmother came from Vilna, worked in a sweatshop on Rivington Street, and married my grandfather, who had also fled the czar, first to Holland and then to New York, where he sold fruit in the streets. The known roots of the Groopmans reach only to the nineteenth century. My mother's family was from the Carpathian Mountains of Hungary, close relatives of the Hasidic rebbe of Satu Mare, or Satmar; but despite this prestigious status at least in certain Jewish circles, the family lost much of its historical memory during the Holocaust.

Our ancestors had a fixed sense of identity as Jews. But we, their progeny, live in a modern world that is markedly less tribal. Culture is now more porous, as races and ethnic groups mix and marry in an open society. For many Americans, traditions have been diluted, and heritage has become remote. Not least for this reason, there is a growing thirst among many ethnic and racial groups to recapture the past. This thirst certainly underlies the current popularity of genealogical research. And the groups that seem most intent on finding links through time are those who were persecuted and driven into diaspora.

Despite some success in searching census records, baptismal books, and marriage documents, there is only so far that these displaced groups can go. Jews in particular face a daunting task, since few records from before the nineteenth century have been preserved. It was only then that the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to register them as members of society, part of a census that assisted in tax collection. Jewish Ashkenazi surnames familiar to us, such as Schneider or Rosenberg, were given by Christian bureaucrats to replace the traditional Hebrew patronymics. Sometimes the surnames were those of towns or villages where the Jews resided; at other times they were drawn from their professions, or simply a Germanic phrase. But once these names were fixed, bloodlines became more difficult to trace. The Sephardim, of course, were expelled from Spain and Portugal in the late fifteenth century, and as they migrated to Asia Minor and North Africa, the lineage of their original Spanish and Portuguese forebears was also largely lost.

So it is not surprising that, like African Americans, American Jews would turn to genetics as a way to reclaim their history. This attempt to reach into the past by using modern science, as Goldstein clearly and compellingly shows, is not as simple as many in the media have made it out to be. Mapping genes and then extrapolating to modern groups is nothing more precise than an exercise in probability. We can come only to partial conclusions, never to full certainty, about what the prevalence of certain genetic traits and markers says about our imagined ancestors.

Goldstein, a professor of molecular genetics at Duke University, wisely affirms from the outset that tracing historical movements and peoples using chromosomal analysis should not be overemphasized:

> Genetic history is both more and less significant than it is depicted in popular accounts. It is less significant because the historical insights that can be achieved with genetics are always very specific and often fairly modest. Caught up as it is in the excitement of modern science, genetic history's power and importance are often overstated, whereas the real grandeur and detail of human history can only be seen in the context of our archeological and written legacies and, of course, our memories. But at times genetic history stretches the boundaries of its scientific formalism and hints at answers to bigger questions: What makes a people a people? What binds them together through time? What alienates them from some and aligns them to others?

To answer these intriguing questions, Goldstein begins with a succinct and easily understood description of the principles of genetics, particularly as they apply to human populations. He avoids technical jargon whenever possible, and defines the science in language that even a neophyte reader can readily grasp. His narrative then moves to the role of the male Y chromosome in identifying the *cohanim*, or the priestly caste in Judaism that was established in the Pentateuch as an office of succession from Aaron and his sons. Neil Bradman, a colorful character who was once a brilliant businessman and then switched careers to study genes and development, was the scientist who enticed Goldstein to pursue genetic history. Bradman and Dr. Karl Skorecki, a kidney specialist at the Rappaport Faculty of Medicine at the Technion Institute in Haifa, had investigated the validity

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of the oral tradition of patrilineal inheritance of the *cohanim*. They looked at the degree of variability of genes on the Y chromosome of Jews who did or did not claim such priestly origins. "Neil's insight was to realize that if the status of priesthood really was inherited from father to son there should be a record of it in the genomes of people today who consider themselves priests," Goldstein writes.

We are then treated to the kind of entertaining and enlightening story that can make science both appreciated and applauded by those outside the discipline.

> Neil sent his son to the beach in Tel Aviv to collect DNA samples.... The team looked at one of the workhorses of Y chromosome genetics—an insertion of a chunk of DNA called an Alu repeat. They also looked at a microsatellite marker, a highly variable stretch of DNA sequence.... They compared the forms of these markers between priests and nonpriests in both Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities. The team hit a home run their first time at bat. They found a striking difference in the Y chromosomes of priests and nonpriests, a difference that was consistent in both the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi communities.

Following this initial success, which resulted in a publication in the prestigious journal *Nature*, Goldstein was recruited to the team.

> I had earned the moniker Mr. Microsatellite and was an imminent transplant to Britain, nervously starting my first job at beguiling and frustrating Oxford University. In this e-mail, Neil introduced himself to me, told me what he was doing, and extended a cordial invitation to Shabbat dinner at its home. He signed himself 'Neil Bradman (of the Jews).' I had no way of knowing it then, but Neil Bradman of the Jews was to become one of my closest research partners over the next five years.
>
> At the time, I thought either this guy, like me, had serious cut-and-paste issues in his e-mails or, more likely, he was barking mad.

Goldstein next reviews the salient tradition from the Bible on the origins of the *cohanim* as descendants of Aaron. The Aaronite family known as the Zadokites became hereditary high priests based on prophetic and historical texts. (Zadok is said to have been a tenth-generation descendent of Aaron who functioned as priest to Kings David and Solomon.) In the summer of 586 B.C.E., the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple. As described in Kings II, the chief priest Seraiah as well as his second in command and several other priestly "keepers of the threshold" were executed. Many of the surviving priests, as described in Ezra, were taken to Babylon during the fifty-year exile. In 538 B.C.E., the Persian King Cyrus, who had conquered the Babylonians, repatriated those who wished to return to their homeland. Drawing on Ezra as well as historical sources, Goldstein points out that some 50,000 Babylonian Jews returned to Jerusalem and re-established priestly sacrifices. Twenty years later, the Second Temple would be completed.

The sacerdotal history is recounted by Goldstein through the Seleucid King Antiochus, who was a threat to the purity of the bloodline of the *cohanim*. Antiochus IV is said to have sold the position of high priest to Jason sometime around 175 B.C.E., along with the right to transform Jerusalem into a Greek polis. Goldstein mentions that another priest, Menelaus, also tried to buy the office of high priest and to supplant Jason. The infighting in Jerusalem and the brutality of Antiochus—his massacres and pillaging of Judea sparked the Hasmonean revolt of the Maccabees, familiar to modern Jews from the Hanukkah story. Mattathias and his five sons, including Judah the Maccabee, were *cohanim*, and there was a twenty-five-year struggle between the Hasmoneans and Seleucids. In 141 B.C.E., Simon, the last of the Maccabee brothers, became high priest and political leader. The *cohanim* then became firmly in control of both the religious and political life of the kingdom. Of course, the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E., with large numbers of Jews exiled after falling to Titus's army.

With this history as background, Goldstein considers two different scenarios, that of adoption versus genetic continuity of the priests.

> The Jews have long carried with them the story of the priests, and at some point in their history these stories could have motivated people to assume, or adopt, priestly status, regardless of their genetic ancestry. In other words, sometime after the dispersal in the first and second centuries C.E., a group of Jews (or maybe non-Jews) could have decided to adopt the title of priest or been awarded it. In time, this group could have come to be accepted as such. We know that in the Second Temple period the award of priestly status had everything to do with political expediency and relatively little to do with genealogy.

Realpolitik would certainly favor the scenario of expediency rather than genealogy. But it turns out that science, by mapping the Y chromosome, which marks male gender, and is passed from father to son, tells a very different story. "At the other extreme from this nongenetic adoption of status is the possibility of genetic continuity, which assumes that the oral tradition is largely correct: the *cohanim* of today are indeed culturally and genetically continuous (on the male side) with the priests who survived the destruction of the Second Temple and subsequent uprisings."

Goldstein rightly reiterates the caveat that he made at the beginning of the book. "In general, genetic history has been successful only in contexts where nongenetic sources of information—for example, texts, oral history, or archaeology—specify mutually exclusive possibilities.... Working without such external information, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to tell a coherent story about the history of a population based solely on genetic data." And so sometimes the necessary research to make probabilistic conclusions about descent moves far out of a laboratory dissecting DNA and comes close to historical and archaeological inquiry.

In order to arrive at an accurate answer to the question of whether the oral tradition surrounding the Jewish priesthood was likely correct, Bradman and Goldstein first had to develop an estimate of the proportion of Jews who might be considered *cohanim*. "My solution was to keep reading books in the hope that someone had mentioned the issue somewhere," Goldstein writes. "Neil Bradman came up with the better idea: go into Jewish cemeteries and start counting all the headstones with the priestly hand symbol on them. Visit enough cemeteries, reasoned Neil, and you'd get a good idea of the proportion in the general population. In this way, Neil made a casual estimate based on *cohanim* symbols found in cemeteries in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. I myself spent a brisk morning wandering around the haunting and beautiful Jewish cemetery in Prague searching for the split-finger insignia and feeling a surprising sense of connection to this community of which I knew so little."

Goldstein, like many scientists, does not suffer fools lightly, and he finds much

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foolish in how this work was communicated to the public. "I keep a folder of various press clippings that mention my work, mostly because my mom and dad often send them to me but also because they are a powerful reminder of the ways in which even modest and speculative research findings get exaggerated and reported as fact," he writes. "For me, the *cohanim* study and the 'Aaron's Y chromosome' headlines it generated represent one of the more egregious examples of this phenomenon." The *Independent* on July 9, 1998, stated that "Jewish line traced back to Moses. *The Jerusalem Report* on May 10, 1999 said that there was "scientific confirmation of an oral tradition passed down through 3,000 years." In Goldstein's mind, "it is striking enough that the Y chromosome could provide any historical information at all. I thought the story was that genetic history was not total bunk and indeed could add to conventional history, archaeology, and anthropology. But the press has a weakness for grandeur."

There is no way to know whether today's *cohanim* are indeed carrying Aaron's Y chromosome. All that can be said—and it is quite a bit—is that "our best guess is that the priestly line was founded before the major dispersals of the Jewish populations—that is, certainly before the time of the Romans and perhaps before the Babylonian conquest in the sixth century B.C.E. Whatever their true origins, whomever they may trace to, the *cohanim* of today are descended from an ancient lineage." But whether that is Aaron, who is placed at the time of the Exodus (which Goldstein points out may not have occurred at all), remains an open question.

The story of the Y chromosome reaches beyond groups identified as Jews. Goldstein moves on to the Lemba, a black tribe in South Africa that, like many, claims descent from the "Lost Tribes" who, following the death of King Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E. and the conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Syrians in the eighth century B.C.E., were ten in number and disappeared. Here, again, chromosomal analysis can be helpful. "Since then, at one time or another innumerable peoples from all over the world—Japanese, Native Americans, Indians, Persians, Ethiopians, North African Berbers, Eskimos, and Tauregs [*sic*] of the Sahara, among others—have claimed descent from one or more of the Lost Tribes."

Here Goldstein expounds on the power of myth in clans and tribes. "Perhaps because it touches something deep within the human psyche—here I'm thinking of the powerful literary themes of home, the return of the prodigal child, grace, forgiveness, and redemption—the myth of the Lost Tribes has persisted," he writes. "So seductive is the narrative that even some otherwise objective and deeply skeptical anthropologists confess a weakness for its.... All of which is to reiterate that, for me, genetic history is not about identifying a Lost Tribe but rather about the broader recurring themes of Jewish history contained within the myth of the Lost Tribes: exile, loss, wanderings, Diaspora, and reclamation of one's heritage. As much as any other piece of Jewish lore, the Lost Tribes story is about the continuing saga of strangers in strange lands."

The Bantu-speaking Lemba are monotheistic, have resisted assimilation, are endogamous, practice circumcision, are buried horizontally (almost all other African tribes bury their dead in a sitting position), practice animal sacrifice, follow a lunar calendar, and observe strict dietary laws akin to kashrut (they do not mix milk and meat or eat pork). Goldstein allows that none of these cultural aspects can be considered "diagnostic"—but again, the whole picture is sufficiently suggestive to hunt for genetic data that could support a link to the Jews. Trefor Jenkins, a South African authority on the genetics of African populations, reported in 1996 that a significant fraction of Y chromosomes of the Lemba was of Semitic origin and not related to other Bantu speakers. Further analysis by Bradman and Goldstein supported Jenkins's early work. Drawing on oral traditions and historical documents, they postulate that the Lemba may have originated in Judea, migrated to Yemen, and then moved to the African continent.

Goldstein's findings, even before they were published in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, made the front page of *The New York Times* in May 1999. This unleashed a flood of publicity about the tribe, and debates about their right of return to Israel, and shipments of religious books and objects. Some Jews traveled to South Africa to bring the group back into the fold. Goldstein reports that in general the Lemba "respectively declined" such offers and preferred to sustain their own "syncretic Judeo-Islamo-Christian existence." Goldstein blames himself, specifically "my big mouth" for speaking to a reporter after his presentation at the Cold Spring Harbor laboratory on this work. "In retrospect, I found that despite my best efforts I can't control how results from my lab are manipulated by others for their own purposes, be they noble or malevolent. Such are the pitfalls of practicing science so intimately connected to human populations and their sense of identity."

Goldstein includes in this short but masterful book yet another instance of how the popular press distorts scientific studies that are at best premature. Recently, a paper appeared trying to explain why certain diseases termed "storage disorders," such as Gaucher's and Tay-Sachs, are so prevalent among Jews. The work, by Gregory Cochran, Jason Hardy, and Henry Harpending, claimed that individuals with these storage disorders show anatomical differences in the brain, particularly involving the ends of nerve cells. They suggested that there may be more interconnections among neurons in such people. They then hypothesize that such a biology could be an explanation for "Ashkenazi intellect."

Goldstein is properly doubtful about this hypothesis. Intellect is notoriously hard to measure; and it also seems overly simplistic to imagine that mutations in storage disorders were selected for in the Ashkenazi community based on the restricted professions that Jews could enter, such as moneylending, as well as the tradition of Torah scholarship. "Are we prepared to attribute much or most of that scholarly impulse to genes?" Goldstein writes. "Is there a danger that the Cochran-Hardy-Harpending approach will somehow legitimize the pseudoscientific genetic determinism that we as scientists and citizens have spent so long fighting against? Genes are not destiny. Nor would I want to minimize the value of good old-fashioned hard work. As far as I'm concerned, our environment, our choices, our agency are factors we ignore at our peril. I hope that readers of this book will come away from it understanding that genes play a critical role in who we are but they always do so in combination with the environment. And in human populations, genetic and environmental contributions are notoriously hard to disentangle."

This theme is echoed in other scientific work that studied a group which believed it was Jewish but had no genetic markers found in other Jewish populations. Tracing genetic lineage is not restricted to studies of the male Y chromosome. We have DNA in our mitochondria, small organelles that are energy factories in the cells. This mitochondrial DNA is inherited strictly from our mothers, and thus traces a matrilineal arc through time. Goldstein recounts the controversy about the Bnei Menashe members of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes in northeastern India

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near the Myanmar border, who number some seven thousand. Like the Lemba, they have for generations observed strikingly Jewish-like rituals including circumcision and a festival centered around unleavened bread. (Hillel Halkin popularized their story in his book *Across the Sabbath River*, initially with deep skepticism, and then believing that they may indeed be a remnant of the Lost Tribe of Manasseh.) Genetic analysis failed to demonstrate any "*cohanim*" Y chromosomes and there was "only equivocal evidence of a Near Eastern origin" using mitochondrial DNA.

Goldstein observes of this skeptical finding that "some commentators took the opportunity to say, essentially, 'Ha—told you they weren't 'real' Jews.' Then, three years ago, the Sephardic rabbinate recognized them as Jews. Many of them now are making their way to Israel. "In my view, this is a perfect example of when we are best served by ignoring DNA—if living, breathing people want to embrace Judaism, genetics should have nothing to say about it one way or the other." That is the true and ringing message of Goldstein's book.

Genes, as Goldstein shows, are interesting to unravel and fun to study. But they are emphatically not destiny. We make existential choices about how we live and what we pass on as culture and values to our children. Judaism has long embraced this; indeed, it pioneered in the invention of tradition and the duty of its transmission. Despite dynastic currents, bloodlines can be established based on character and commitment. King Saul stumbles in his duties to Israel and God and his progeny are no longer royal. Ruth is a Moabite, a tribe that sorely vexed the Hebrews, but Ruth famously follows her mother-in-law Naomi and so elects to be part of the Jewish people—and it is Ruth's line that spawns David and therefore, according to the tradition, the Messiah.

The great and beautiful irony is that this ancient assessment of position and potential in society, this hostility to biological determinism and respect for free human choice and its consequences, is also at the core of modernity. It is refreshing to have this truth now affirmed, and in this context, by a geneticist. In his typically wry tone, Goldstein remarks, "Forced to choose between Jewish mothers and Jewish genes, I'll take Mom every time." Perhaps that is why my mind moved so far from my own clan and remembered my poor patient, the scion of New England Puritans. David Goldstein's inclination is splendidly universal. Deeds rather than descent are what define a person. ◆

Robert Alter
ONLY WORDS TO PLAY WITH

THE DELIGHTED STATES: A BOOK OF NOVELS, ROMANCES, & THEIR UNKNOWN TRANSLATORS, CONTAINING TEN LANGUAGES, SET ON FOUR CONTINENTS, & ACCOMPANIED BY MAPS, PORTRAITS, SQUIGGLES, ILLUSTRATIONS, & A VARIETY OF HELPFUL INDEXES
By Adam Thirlwell
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 559 pp., $30)

Does style in the novel count for much? The evidence of the novelists themselves is somewhat mixed. A few prominent novelists, such as Dreiser, have been wretched stylists. Trollope's prose was no more than serviceable, yet with it he produced an abundance of genuinely engaging novels, a good many of which are fine representations of class and character in Victorian England. Balzac was not at all a brilliant stylist, and on occasion he could be bombastic, especially in his handling of figurative language, but *The Human Comedy* is among the most grand and enduring achievements of the genre. Stendhal famously announced that he wanted to fashion a factual, understated prose that would compete with the language of the civil registry, but style makes a real difference in his novels, and anyone who has read him in French is likely to sense a sad diminution of his lightness of touch and his worldly tone in the English translations. And at the other end of the field, many great novelists have been exquisite, and in some cases painstaking, stylists: Fielding (whom Stendhal greatly admired); Flaubert, the inaugurator of the modern idea of the novelist as fastidious artificer; Joyce, Kafka, and Nabokov, all of them varying heirs to the Flaubertian tradition; and, of course, Proust.

The question of style in the novel urgently needs to be addressed because it has been so widely neglected, especially in academic circles, since the 1970s. The principal reason for the neglect is quite evident: in departments of literary studies, the very term and concept of style—even of language itself—have been widely displaced by something called discourse, a notion that principally derives from Foucault. Discourse in the sense that has generally been adopted is a manifestation, or perhaps rather a tool, of ideology. It flows through the circuits of society, manipulating individuals and groups in the interests of the powers that be, manifesting itself equally, or at least in related ways, in poetry and fiction, in political speeches, government directives, manuals of mental and physical hygiene, advertising, and much else. This orientation toward discourse was at the heart of the New Historicism (now a fading phenomenon), and it is instructive that one of its founders, Stephen Greenblatt, in the preface to his admirable *Hamlet in Purgatory*, should have felt constrained to say that there is no point in talking about Shakespeare if you do not respond to the magic of the language, thus implicitly repudiating many of his followers and perhaps some of his own earlier inclinations.

After the New Historicism, though sometimes drawing on it, literary scholars have been busy pursuing a spectrum of purportedly political agendas with illustrative reference to literary texts—race, gender identity, sexual practices, the critique of colonialism, the excoriation of consumerism and of the evils of late capitalism and globalization. There has scarcely been room in such considerations for any attention to style—for the recognition that it is literary style that might make available to us certain precious perceptions of reality and certain distinctive pleasures not to be found elsewhere. When one encounters intelligent appreciations of style these days, they tend to come from practicing novelists, or from a few critics who have no more than one foot in academic life.

Against this background, Adam Thirlwell's book is a welcome engagement of unjustly marginalized issues. Thirlwell is a young British novelist who so far has published one work of fiction, *Politics*, a novel about a ménage-à-trois. Although some of the intricate couplings and triplings reported in *Politics* might seem the stuff of pornography, everything in the book is mediated by a wry, reflective, and self-reflexive narrator who is vaguely reminiscent of the playful narrator Diderot deploys in *Jacques*

Robert Alter is completing a book on the role of the King James Version in prose style in the American novel.

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the Fatalist and His Master, a book that, as becomes clear in *The Delighted States*, is a favorite of Thirlwell's. But in *Politics* the narrator eventually becomes a little tiresome, perhaps in part because the characters on whom he expatiates, and from whose experience he draws moral generalizations, are rather flat. Thirlwell uses much the same sort of narrator in *The Delighted States*, but on the whole it holds up better. The book, notwithstanding its limitations, is entertaining to read all the way through, and this is no small virtue in an age in which most works of criticism are about as much fun as a visit to the proctologist.

The tenor of *The Delighted States* is nicely conveyed by the descriptive rubric, a grand flourish in eighteenth-century style, that is set beneath the title: "A Book of Novels, Romances, & Their Unknown Translators, Containing Ten Languages, Set on Four Continents, & Accompanied by Maps, Portraits, Squiggles, Illustrations, & a Variety of Helpful Indexes." The squiggles are mostly the ones that Sterne scatters through the pages of *Tristram Shandy* along with other typographical exuberances. The illustrations, which are part of the amusement of the book, consist mainly of photographs and portraits of the writers discussed, sometimes with friends and relations, and reproductions of the title pages of first editions of the novels. The conceit announced by Thirlwell for the presentation of these disparate materials is that this is not a work of criticism, but itself a kind of novel: "This book—which I sometimes think of as a novel, an inside-out novel, with novelists as characters—is about the art of the novel. It is also, therefore, about the art of translation."

Although this claim to the status of novel is certainly inaccurate, it works well enough as a rhetorical ploy, inviting the reader to imagine himself in the pleasant company of one of those chatty, urbane, witty narrators that presided over novels from Fielding (who is barely mentioned in the book) to Svevo and, still occasionally, beyond. I should say that Thirlwell's list of favorite novelists happily coincides to a large degree with my own, and most of the writers he discusses at length are ones I have been drawn to write about over the years: Cervantes, Sterne, Diderot, Stendhal, Flaubert, Joyce, Kafka, Nabokov, Bellow. It is clear from this list that he is especially interested in novelists who are playfully self-conscious about the art of the novel, who probe their relationship with their readers, flaunt the fictionality of their fictions, and call attention to the formal patterns of their artifice. He also assumes, as he makes explicit at one point, that the novel is essentially a comic form. (Flaubert would not quite fit, but perhaps Kafka might, as a writer who at least in Walter Benjamin's view produced theological comedy.) What Thirlwell has to say about these sundry writers is for the most part perfectly apt, though not much of it will seem new to anybody familiar with the novels and with the criticism on them.

It is worth considering why Thirlwell assumes that a book on the art of the novel is necessarily also a book on the art of translation, for this will bring us closer to the question of style with which he repeatedly tries to grapple. Novels, rather more than poetry, have enjoyed the most vigorous international circulation in translation. Few of us read Russian (Thirlwell does), but Tolstoy and Dostoevsky loom large in the imaginative landscape of most people seriously interested in literature, even if their early experience of these writers was through the Edwardian tonalities and inaccuracies of Constance Garnett's English versions. What is even more remarkable is that many writers have been inspired by novelists whom they could not read in the original: the Brazilian Machado de Assis by Sterne and Fielding; the Yiddish writer Mendele Moykher Sforim by Cervantes; Agnon by Knut Hamsun and Flaubert. Highly productive literary cross-fertilization has been consummated even when the translation used was seriously flawed, sometimes actually riddled with errors. "The history of translation," Thirlwell wisely observes, "is the history of mistakes." It is a declaration I can endorse from my own experience as a translator.

There is something scandalous about the manifest translatability of the novel, which might shed some light on the role of style in the novel. The principal purpose of *The Delighted States* is to make sense of this scandal. Thirlwell is finely sensitive to the way an assonance, an alliteration, a cadence, a subtle and surprising turn of syntax, shape our responses to what we read, and so he is led to puzzle over why so much of the translated novel seems to come through in the absence of most such refinements of style. Toward the end, he summarizes this central puzzlement: "All through this book, I have been arguing that style is the most important thing, and survives its mutilating translations—that although the history of translation is always a history of disillusion, somehow something survives. Yet this still shocks me, with my aesthetic prejudices, and preferences."

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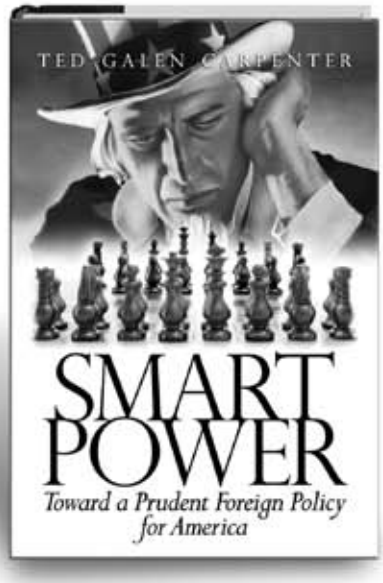

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As an exemplary instance of the scandal of translatability, Thirlwell cites Isaac Bashevis Singer's spectacular success in American English, which was famously inaugurated in 1953 with Saul Bellow's translation of "Gimpel the Fool." Bellow's English version is captivatingly robust, but, as Thirlwell notes, there is a small shift in meaning from the very first words: "I am Gimpel the fool. I don't think myself a fool." In the Yiddish, in the first sentence the word is *tam* and in the second sentence it is *nar*, with a nuance of difference between them. *Nar* (Germanic origin) is an out-and-out fool, whereas *tam* (Hebrew origin) suggests mental simplicity and perhaps innocence as well. As Singer then proceeded to collaborate with a variety of different translators, he himself was notoriously indifferent to such nuances, freely altering his Yiddish texts in the working sessions in the interest of making them more viable in English. "Singer's style," Thirlwell notes, "was able to accommodate quite a lot of loss and destruction. It was not the delicate thing that a style is meant to be." This is one of those cases where the extreme case teaches us something about the typical.

Flaubert's style was in fact a delicate thing, but still *Madame Bovary* in translation has been able to grip both general readers and other novelists, despite the fact that much of the delicacy is likely to have been effaced. This strong impact is less true of the translations of Flaubert's greatest novel, *The Sentimental Education*. My guess is that the difference lies in the compelling story of self-delusion and self-destruction that carries *Madame Bovary* forward even without the fine turns of style, whereas *The Sentimental Education* is purposefully a novel in which nothing happens, in which everything depends on the subtle representation of the protagonist's apprehension of society, the history that he witnesses, and the illusory realm of desire. Absent this stylistic finesse, what is beautifully shaded in the French may seem a little flat in translation.

Camus, in an essay called "*Problèmes du roman*" that Thirlwell cites, shrewdly remarked that "people imagine—wrongly—that novels do not require style. They do, in fact, demand style of the most difficult kind, the one which takes second place." Style in the novel is the most difficult kind because, even when the writer invests extravagant labor in it, ultimately it has to incorporate an element of self-abnegation: a novel in which style is the supreme end in itself runs the danger of devolving into preciosity or mannerism. But what is it to which style must take second place? I think one would have to say (this is not what Thirlwell says) that it is the representation of the social, historical, and political world, and of the thought, emotions, and moral experience of the characters.

Near the beginning of his book, Thirlwell proposes what looks like an antithetical view. All novels, he says, are "miniaturizations. They are never real life itself. Real life is always elsewhere." It is this very chasm between world and book, he goes on to argue, that makes translation possible: "The style of a novel, and a novelist, is a set of instructions, a project: it is never able to create an entirely unique, irreplaceable object." The question, of course, is what is the aim and nature of the project. Virtually all novels, whether they are as zany as *Tristram Shandy* or as obsessive as *Crime and Punishment* or as wittily self-conscious as *Pale Fire*, seek to create, I think, some imaginatively arresting simulacrum of the world that we more or less know, which is of course made up of things, events, people, relationships, and institutions, and not of words. Novelists have only language with which to construct their simulacra of the world. "Oh, my Lolita," Humbert Humbert says, expressing not only his own desperation in his prison cell but the ontological anxiety of every novelist, "I have only words to play with!"

"Miniaturization" is a clever way of designating this ontological gap between the novel and the world, but it is not quite right. A novel is always immeasurably smaller than its objects of representation—a life, a relationship, a city, a society, a historical moment; but its fundamental mimetic trick is precisely that it does *not* feel small. Through the artful deployment of a relatively limited number of words—say, one hundred thousand for a run-of-the-mill novel—the writer creates the illusion of the largeness of life. The novelistic use of language may legitimately be thought of as "a set of instructions, a project" that enables the reader to imagine a particular configuration of human experience, but such a characterization has one misleading implication. Sets of instructions are not dependent on the medium in which they are formulated.

The instructions for assembling a chair you have been imprudent enough to purchase from a catalogue may be expressed in words or entirely in a series of diagrams; but if you successfully follow the instructions, you will end up with the same chair whether you have been guided by words or by pictures. Novels are just a little bit like this, which may be why they lend themselves to translation. When Emma Bovary, after her first tryst with Rodolphe, deliriously tells herself, "I have a lover," the fact that "lover" sounds different from *amant* and might conceivably have slightly different cultural implications scarcely matters. Readers of the novel in translation get the essential idea that Flaubert meant to convey, including the social role referred to, the character's erotic excitement, and her romantic

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in a flowering of lights
beyond which
one by one, haphazardly
the dented, the rusted through,
metallic Eves and Adams
hurry past, as if ashamed,
their dull beams averted,
low in the historical dark they disappear into.

ALAN SHAPIRO

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delusions, for which the words he chose serve as a set of instructions.

Yet something happens in the novel through the elaborately wrought medium of style that resists translation, even as the large represented world of the novel is conveyed well enough in another language. If you try to imagine *Moby-Dick* in French or Chinese or Hindi, you can readily conceive that the tale of Ahab's monstrous monomania and of the exotic crew of the *Pequod*, the tremendous evocations of the great white whale as a virtually mythological presence, the vivid descriptions of the chase in small boats for whales, would all still come across to far-flung readers. And *that* is what style takes second place to in the novel. Still, it is a second place that has electrifying importance. Consider even a brief sentence: "The sea was as a crucible of molten gold, that bubblingly leaps with light and heat." A translation could easily reproduce the simile of the crucible of molten gold and the vigor of the verb "leaps," but the deliberate oddness of the adverbial "bubblingly" that focuses the movement of the water and the alliteration and assonance of "leaps with light and heat" that lock the clause together are another matter. All these small stylistic effects help create the lyric intensity of this moment of the sea perceived from the moving ship, and they are bound to be diminished in translation.

A different operation of the force of style may be seen in these words from a dramatic dialogue spoken by the black cabin-boy Pip: "Oh, thou big white God aloft there somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy on this small black boy down here; preserve him from all men that have no bowels to feel fear!" The artful shaping of the language is less spectacular here, but it is no less decisive. The dense clustering of monosyllabic words generates a clenched power. Instead of any gesture toward African American dialect, Pip is made to speak a dignified poetic language that in its pronounced iambic cadences is reminiscent, like much else in this novel, of Shakespeare. The archaic "yon" is ancillary to this intention, and the use of "bowels" in the sense of "deep feelings" or "compassion," drawn directly from the King James Version of the Bible, equally harks back to the early seventeenth century. The high solemnity of Pip's address to God could presumably be conveyed in another language, but it is the specific biblical resonances (perhaps especially, of Psalms) and of Shakespeare (as usual in this novel, ultimately pointing to *King Lear*) that give these words their peculiar metaphysical and poetic dignity, resisting translation.

Style is immensely important in Adam Thirlwell's account of the art of novel and of the art of translation, but it is hard to make out what, finally, he means by style. The chatty, episodic, sometimes free-associative expository strategy he uses, abounding in engaging anecdotes about novelists and translators, makes *The Delighted States* a charming book, but not much of a vehicle for sustained thought. What we get is a scattering of pronouncements on style, often tending toward aphorism, and not obviously linked together in a single conceptual frame. "A style, in the end, is a list of methods by which a novelist achieves various effects." Well, yes, but what does this banality tell us that we didn't already know? Or: "No art work is ever the thing itself. It is always inflected by a style." Fair enough, though this is rather like reminding us that in a painting oils on canvas are used to represent a certain perception of a three-dimensional object in two dimensions and are not the thing itself. And finally: "A style is not just a prose style. Sometimes, it is not even a form of composition. Style is a quality of vision; a soul." One has to assent to this declaration, furlongs distant as it may be from the definition of style as a list of methods. A quality of vision is surely what defines the small specimens of Melville's style that I have just cited. But is there any way to speak cogently about this quality of vision and to consider to what degree it may be wedded to the original language in which it is cast?

Consider the case of Dickens, who is surely the most energetically original stylist among nineteenth-century British novelists (and who, weirdly, barely figures in *The Delighted States*). Now, the novels of Dickens have enjoyed the most prominent international currency in a variety of languages—Russian, German, Yiddish, Hebrew, and many others. One can see how the elaborate plots with their ingenious resolutions, the wild humor, the vivid caricatures, the brilliant metaphors, might all be conveyed in other languages. But Dickens is a master of mesmerizing cadences and subtle shifts in linguistic register, of sound play and allusive echoes—all of which constitute the quality of vision that is his ultimately untranslatable style. Here is a moment from his last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, in which the young (and rather colorless) heroine steps outside the door of a ramshackle pub in a seedy neighborhood along the Thames:

> The chaining of the door behind her, as she went forth, disenchanted Lizzie Hexam of that first relief she had felt. The night was black and shrill, the river-side wilderness was melancholy, and there was a sound of casting-out, in the rattling of iron links, and the grating of the bolts and staples under Miss Abbey's hand. As she came beneath the lowering sky, a sense of being involved in a murky shade of Murder dropped upon her; and, as the tidal swell of the river broke at her feet without her seeing how it gathered, so her thoughts startled her by rushing out of an unseen void and striking at her heart.

The only translations I have been able to locate are one in Russian and one done in 1954 in French by a team of three translators, to which I will refer. (The international canon has evidently embraced *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* but not *Our Mutual Friend*.) One might characterize this representation of Lizzie stepping out into the menacing London night while the door is bolted behind her as a moment of high melodrama, though it is melodrama that, through the agency of Dickens's style, assumes the potency of myth. The metallic clanging and rattling of those chains and bolts that shut Lizzie out in the realm of darkness are what palpably pull the scene together, and these can be conveyed by a competent translation, as the French trio demonstrates.

But the sound of the language and the resonance of certain key terms are something else. Like Melville, though without the intention of invoking Shakespeare and Milton, Dickens gives his prose the enchantment of poetry by repeatedly gliding into iambic cadences: "The night was black and shrill"; "she came beneath the lowering sky"; "and striking at her heart." He beautifully counterpoints insistent monosyllabic words ("night," "black," "shrill") with polysyllabic ones ("wilderness," "melancholy"). The French turns all this into something that sounds vaguely like the flaccid Romantic poetry of Lamartine: *La nuit était noire, la bise perçante, la rive déserte et morne*. The inspired choice of the term "casting-out" brings the entire passage into the eschatological orbit of the New Testament's "cast[ing] out into" a place of "wailing and gnashing of teeth." The phonetic assimilation of "murky" and "Murder" has the effect of coagulating the thickening sense of terror that informs the scene. (The French entirely throws in the towel here, dispensing with the expected *ténébreux* for "murky" and blandly saying that

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Lizzie felt above her *une atmosphère de meurtre*.) Against this whole ominous background, the "unseen void" at the end takes on cosmic amplitude—"void" is, after all, the word that the King James Version chose for the chaos before creation at the beginning of Genesis—while the parallel structure that locks "void" in with "heart" makes a grand climax to this experience of midnight dread.

There is no process more instructive about the subtle articulations and the intricate semantic layering of a literary text than the attempt to translate it. The process is a humbling one, as any honest translator will confess. The scandalous fact that so much of the original manages to get through, for all the reshapings and misshapings that a translator inevitably inflicts on the author's words, is a happy circumstance for anyone who loves literature: despite the linguistic ignorance we share, we may enjoy the literary riches of other cultures, imperfect as that enjoyment may often be. At the same time, the gap between even a very good translation—Thirlwell provides an excellent one of the initial French version of Nabokov's "Mademoiselle O" as an appendix to his book—and the original reminds us that style plays a determinative role in constituting the imaginative world of any work of fiction. In fact, one of the reasons for the sense of largeness in the represented world of a good novel is, as the few examples I have offered illustrate, that the sundry components of language are made to fit together in a way that creates the sense of an integrated world, not merely of bits and pieces of narrative and descriptive detail.

This stylistic integration, by and large, is performed intuitively and not by calculation, though there have been some fanatically calculating stylists, such as Flaubert and Joyce. Language comprises highly heterogeneous elements, so the constituents of style are themselves heterogeneous and their combinations and permutations intrinsically unpredictable. The sound and the length of the words, their syntactic ordering, the cadences in which they are arranged, the levels of diction they manifest, the antecedent texts they evoke explicitly or obliquely, their deployment of figurative language—all combine in shifting patterns to put an indelible stamp on one moment after another and on the entire fictional world constituted from those moments. Reading the untranslatable text is ultimately what departments of literary studies ought to be about, but in the pseudo-political atmosphere that has dominated the academy for several decades, the reverse has taken place: the original text has been read as though it might as well have been a translation. Teachers of literature and their hapless students have tended to look right through style to the purported grounding of the text in one ideology or another.

The double lesson of translation is that style does not mean everything in a work of literature but that it means a great deal, and certainly more than translation can convey. Great literature, any sensitive reader will grant, is in some way a magical thing, and this magic is not only a process of inducing rapture but also of enabling thought, inviting the perception of complex associative links, seeing one frame of meaning in connection with another, or with several others. Attending to style is intensely pleasurable and, in the best cases, illuminating. It is an activity that deserves to be revived. ◆

Adam Kirsch
THE COUNTRY OF THE DAMNED

COLLECTED POEMS 1919–1976
By Allen Tate
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 218 pp., $16)

In the galaxy of American modernism, Allen Tate is now a black hole. The authority that made him, in the 1930s and 1940s, one of the most formidable figures in American poetry, mentor and superego to a generation, has collapsed. Neither his strenuously ambiguous poems nor his orotund essays in literary interpretation (he was one of the deities of the New Criticism) are still commonly read. In both realms, Tate seems to represent a version of modernism scarcely more acceptable than the politics—Agrarian, neo-Confederate, quasi-fascist—that put the seal on his obsolescence.

Like a dead star, however, Tate can still be detected in the strong pull that he exerts. His strength can be gauged by the strength that other poets had to summon to resist him. It is impossible to make sense of Hart Crane's programmatic optimism about modernity and America without seeing it as a response to Tate's equally programmatic despair. Nor can the central drama of mid-century American poetry—the rebellion against modernism that led Robert Lowell, John Berryman, and Randall Jarrell drastically to clarify and to personalize their language—come into focus unless it is understood in part as an Oedipal rebellion against Tate's hieratic example.

Since Tate's modernism now looks like a dead end in American poetry, it is all the more necessary to understand how powerful and attractive it once seemed. This new publication of Tate's *Collected Poems*—reprinting the arrangement that Tate himself made in 1977—is a reminder that, while his body of work is slender and uneven, Tate did evolve a distinctive and influential verse style, a dialect of his own within the period's avant-garde language. His immediate and quite genuine identification with the sensibility of modernism—above all, with Eliot and Pound—sets Tate apart from the many forgotten epigones for whom that sensibility was merely a fashion.

From the moment Tate emerged as a poet, in the early 1920s, he impressed everyone who knew him as the bearer of the century's dark blessing—as the writer who understood just how exaltedly difficult modern poetry was doomed to be. This knowledge seemed like the birthright of his generation—he was born in 1899—rather than something he could have learned growing up in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia, or as a student at genteel Vanderbilt. Indeed, Tate's juvenilia, which can be found in the "Early Poems" section of this volume, take a provincial pleasure in shocking the provinces. There are pieces titled "Euthanasia" and "Elegy for Eugenesis," containing words like "fallopian" and "protoplasm"—reminders of a time when medical vocabulary could seem transgressive and disillusioned.

In 1922, when Crane came across one of Tate's poems in *The Double Dealer*, a little magazine published in New Orleans, he wrote to him excitedly, honoring the Southerner as a fellow disciple of the great Eliot. In fact, as Tate was at pains to note even decades later, he had not yet heard of Eliot; if he sounded like him, it was because the age was speaking through both of them. When he did read "Gerontion" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," he recognized a brother: "Eliot goes straight to the real thing; this is of course his 'modernity,' and I am with him."

Adam Kirsch is a book critic for the New York Sun and the author of a new collection of poems, Invasions (Ivan R. Dee).

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Yet as Tate recalled in 1968, in his essay "Poetry Modern and Unmodern: A Personal Recollection," it was not exactly reassuring to get back his own thoughts clad in Eliot's alienated majesty. "I got [Eliot's] *Poems* (1920) at once and I couldn't write anything for several months," he mordantly remembered. "This man, though by no means famous at that time, was evidently so thoroughly my contemporary that I had been influenced by him before I had read a line of his verse. There were two great poems in that volume that seemed to do everything that I wanted to do: 'Gerontion' and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.'" In the next few years Tate would follow the usual practice of young poets by unconsciously copying the poems that he admired.

Yet even after he had moved beyond obvious parodies such as "A Pauper" ("I see him old, trapped in a burly house / Cold in the angry spitting of a rain"), Eliot's example would hunch over Tate's shoulder like an incubus. His verse is seldom entirely free from Eliot. Even his best-known work, "Ode to the Confederate Dead," is deeply indebted to "Gerontion" in attitude and tone; and in his criticism, he acknowledged, "what I owe to Eliot is pervasive." Eliot's intellectual example would prove overpowering for Tate. His conception of modernity as a time of chaos and deracination, his longing for order and rootedness—and the dire political consequences of these attitudes—were all reprises of Eliot. The most important reason why Tate did not accomplish more as a writer was that he could not see beyond Eliot's solutions to their shared problems.

In the early 1920s, though, Eliot's example was still energizing. Tate's infatuation helped to set him apart from the rest of the Vanderbilt poets, just then becoming nationally prominent thanks to their magazine, *The Fugitive*. Being up-to-date was always a part of *The Fugitive* creed—a necessity, as they saw it, in a South still under the sway of moonlight and magnolia. John Crowe Ransom sounded this note in his introduction to the first issue of the magazine: "Official exception having been taken by the sovereign people to the mint julep, a literary phase known rather euphemistically as Southern Literature has expired, like any other stream whose source is stopped up.... THE FUGITIVE flees from nothing faster than from the high-caste Brahmins of the Old South."

But being modern was one thing, and being a modernist—like Tate, in a nearly ideological sense—was another. The difference can be seen by comparing Ransom's poems, in which decorum and lyricism are delicately ironized, with Tate's, where they are aggressively defaced:

> The stage is about to be swept of
> corpses.
> You have no more chance than an
> infusorian
> Lodged in a hollow molar of an
> eohippus.
> Come now, no prattle of reemergence
> with the *ontos on* . . .

Tate's "Horatian Epode to the Duchess of Malfi," written in 1922, is saturated in Eliot and Pound, where Ransom had never gotten further than E. A. Robinson. It makes sense that the bitterest episode in the poets' lifelong friendship came when Ransom published a hostile review of "The Waste Land," leading to a published exchange of condescending denunciations. Tate railed against his professor's "superannuate theories," while Ransom mocked his student's youthful arrogance ("his letter is but a proper token of his final emancipation, composed upon the occasion of his accession to the ripe age of twenty-three").

The question of just how modern one needed to sound had special salience in Nashville, where the Fugitives experienced the usual fate of prophets in their own country. The magazine that was eagerly read in New York and London did not make its contributors very popular at Vanderbilt, where they repeatedly clashed with the old-guard English faculty. (Notoriously, the university failed to make any effort to stop Ransom from decamping to Kenyon College, where his *Kenyon Review* became a Bible of the New Criticism.) No wonder that, in the 1920s, Tate looked north for moral support, defining himself less as a Southerner than as an agent of the Modernist International in exile. "Though many miles separate me, a Southern barbarian, from you all," he wrote to Crane, "I can't help but feel that I am one of you—in the making anyway."

When he moved to New York in 1925, plunging into the world of Edmund Wilson and Edna St. Vincent Millay, of *Broom* and *Secession*, he turned a little shy of his *Fugitive* past. One Northerner claimed that Tate even tried to suppress his accent, and bragged that his nickname in college had been "the Yankee." Yet Tate's years in New York, followed by a Guggenheim-sponsored sojourn in Paris, did not have the effect of Yankeefying him. He never acclimated to metropolitan life—one of his best early poems, "The Subway," uses a

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Cranean rhetoric to transform riding the train into a journey to the underworld:

> Harshly articulate, musical steel shell
> Of angry worship, hurled religiously
> Upon your business of humility
> Into the iron forestries of hell. . . .

He was even more put off by the avant-garde pieties of the Paris of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, which he recalled in his essay "Miss Toklas' American Cake." He could not understand the universal reverence for Gertrude Stein, whose holy idiocies grated on him: "I never got anything" from the famous salon in the rue de Fleurus, he complained, "not even much education."

What Tate got from his expatriation, instead, was the opportunity to re-imagine the South from a distance, to transform it from a lived reality to an imaginative symbol. To Tate, deeply under the sway of Eliotian impersonality, this was the only way to bring experience into poetry. "The South," he insisted defensively, "is as good a correlative of emotion as any place else." The virtue of this method, and its cost, can be seen in "Ode to the Confederate Dead"—which Tate first drafted, appropriately enough, in a garret on Bank Street. The poet who had longed for Bohemia in Nashville was now dreaming, in Greenwich Village, of a South that he had never known:

> Turn your eyes to the immoderate past,
> Turn to the inscrutable infantry rising
> Demons out of the earth—they will
> not last.
> Stonewall, Stonewall, and the sunken
> fields of hemp,
> Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill,
> Bull Run,
> Lost in that orient of the thick-and-fast
> You will curse the setting sun.

The trajectory of those last two lines, from dawn to decadence, is that of the poem as a whole. The poet, meditating in a cemetery for Southern soldiers, contrasts their certitude and courage with his own debility, and that of his age. Like the leaves on their tombstones, the dead are "driven by the fierce scrutiny / Of heaven to their election in the vast breath": "fierce," like the other martial and aggressive adjectives in the poem ("strict," "arrogant," "furious"), carries an unmistakably positive charge. The soldiers' memories, like their corpses, are "inexhaustible"—"not / Dead, but feed the grass row after rich row." Yet the present does not know how to draw sustenance from its heritage, as Tate makes clear in a barrage of images borrowed more or less directly from Eliot. The "you" the poem addresses is compared to "the blind crab" on the ocean floor (like the "ragged claws" of "Prufrock"); "You know who have waited by the wall / The twilight certainty of an animal," Tate adjures (echoing Tiresias in "The Waste Land," who "sat by Thebes below the wall"); meanwhile "the grey lean spiders come, they come and go" ("talking, presumably, of Michelangelo," as Christopher Benfey aptly jokes in his fine introduction to the *Collected Poems*).

It is a measure of the distinctiveness of Tate's style that the "Ode," with all these obvious echoes of Eliot, nevertheless does not collapse into pastiche. What marks the poem as Tate's own is his way with adjectives, especially Latinate adjectives, and above all ones with negative prefixes. "Impunity" appears in the first line, followed by "inexhaustible," "immitigable," "immoderate," "inscrutable," "invisible," and "improbable" (not to mention "infantry"). It would almost be fair to say that the real subject of the poem is the prefix "in-," and the particular verbal emotion it inspires in Tate—of unbending, antique, Roman (and Confederate) sternness.

Significantly, it is when dealing with the Confederate past, its distinctive emotions and language, that Tate is at his most powerful; and it is when he turns to chastising the present that he is at his most derivative. In giving him a vocabulary for spiritual deadness, Eliot seems to have commandeered his very imagination of the spirit—as though deadness were all that could be ascribed to it in the modern world. In this way, the failings of the "Ode"—which is Tate's most characteristic poem, but not his best—point to what would become larger failings in his work. Instead of putting into verse his own experience of the South—even if only his experience of the South as a symbol, an emotional "correlative"—Tate would increasingly distort it to fit a prior ideological doctrine about the proper relation of the past to the present.

The rudiments of this ideology are already clear in Tate's poems of the 1920s. The past, it holds, was organic, orderly, and obedient, content with the secular and religious hierarchies that it inherited. The present, in thrall to a delusive technological liberalism, has discarded those hierarchies, leaving us with no common standards in art or life, and no way of approaching the divine. The best poetic expression Tate found for this cluster of ideas was the poem "Last Days of Alice," from 1931, in which the message is enlivened by grotesquerie and a Metaphysical knottiness. Lewis Carroll's Alice, "grown lazy, mammoth but not fat," becomes an emblem of modern narcissism, staring endlessly into her looking glass:

> Alone to the weight of impassivity,
> Incest of spirit, theorem of desire,
> Without will as chalky cliffs by the sea,
> Empty as the bodiless flesh of fire:
>
> All space, that heaven is a dayless night,
> A nightless day driven by perfect lust
> For vacancy, in which her bored
> eyesight
> Stares at the drowsy cubes of human
> dust.

This is already tendentious enough, but Tate could be much more explicit. "Every son-of-a-bitch is Christ, at least Rousseau," he wrote in "Retroduction to American History." "In an age of abstract experience, fornication / Is self-expression," he added in "Causerie." The vulgar blatancy of these editorializing poems, written when Tate was still in his twenties, was a sign that ideology had already started to eclipse experience.

Ironically enough, Tate recognized the danger that he was facing, because he had seen the same thing happen to Eliot. In his review of Eliot's "Poems 1909–1925," Tate offers a perfect prophecy of his own development:

> The critical idea of disorder . . . was obviously conviction prior to reflection, but to one in Mr. Eliot's spiritual unrest it speedily becomes a protective idea; it ceases to be emotion, personal attitude; one ceases reiterating it as such. This rationalization of attitude puts in a new light the progressive sterilization of his poetry. It partly explains the slenderness of his production: a poetry with the tendency to ideas betrays itself into criticism, as it did in Arnold, when it becomes too explicit, too full. . . . The intellectual conception is now so complete that he suddenly finds there is no symbolism, no expressive correspondence, no poetry, for it.

All this may be partly true of Eliot, but it is much more true of Tate himself. The difference lay in Eliot's willingness to embrace "disorder" and become one with it—to let it speak through him, rather than simply condemning it. He was able to articulate his "spiritual unrest" in his verse, even as late as "Four Quartets," while he was propagandizing for order in his criticism. Tate, too, is at his best when he allows disorder to inhabit his

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poetry; but he had less of the courage or the skill necessary to keep himself open to it. His "intellectual conception" of the modern problem, and his authoritarian solution to it, began to usurp his "personal attitude" as early as the mid-1930s. While he wrote some significant poems in the 1940s, and a few of his very best in the early 1950s, he fell totally silent in his last three decades; and all of his work from 1937 to 1979 fits into less than fifty pages in the *Collected Poems*.

It is surely not a coincidence that Tate's poetry began to dry up in the years when he was involved with the Agrarian movement. The creation of Southern intellectuals, many of them former Fugitives, Agrarianism had no real political impact in the Depression years—as the New Dealer Rexford Tugwell said, it was a "literary romp" for "sentimentalists who hadn't any idea what they were talking about." (Thomas A. Underwood quotes this judgment, and offers a fearlessly thorough anatomy of the movement, in his excellent biography *Allen Tate: Orphan of the South*.) But starting with the publication of *I'll Take My Stand*, the Agrarians' manifesto, in 1930, the label gave Tate, Ransom, and other Southerners a way to organize their literary and political thought, and to get publicity for it.

It also associated them with some of the worst ideas and movements of the age. Tate explicitly took inspiration from the French fascist Charles Maurras, envisioning Agrarianism as "a society something like the *Action Française* group." Maurras was also an enthusiasm of Eliot's, and it is no coincidence that it was during a visit to Virginia in 1933, at the height of Agrarianism, that Eliot delivered his infamous remarks about "free-thinking Jews." Tate never openly registered anti-Semitism, but Underwood reveals that it was just as prevalent among the Agrarians as one would expect from their allegiances. Tate wrote to the Southern poet John Peale Bishop about "the Jewish nature of liberalism and … the Old Testament character of *Das Kapital*." Underwood also traces the comedy of errors that resulted when Tate and the Agrarians allied themselves with a crackpot magazine publisher named Seward Collins. The group hoped to colonize Collins's *American Review* and turn it into an Agrarian magazine. As it turned out, Collins's outspoken fascism ended up tarring them with a brush they were very eager to avoid. (They were particularly embarrassed when Collins told an interviewer that his enthusiasm for reaction extended to banning innovations like the automobile and the bathtub.)

But inevitably, given the Agrarians' neo-Confederate worldview, they were at their worst when it came to race. In the early 1930s Tate committed himself to the most hideous kind of white supremacy, writing in the *American Review* that "I belong to the white race, therefore I intend to support white rule. Lynching is a symptom of weak, inefficient rule … [it] will disappear when the white race is satisfied that its supremacy will not be questioned in social crises." He wrote privately to Lincoln Kirstein that "the negro race is an inferior race.… Our purpose is to keep the negro blood from passing into the white race." He opposed the Scottsboro Boys because "defense of ten negroes would be defense of the whole race. Rather than that, I will shut my eyes, and see the colored boys executed." He protested a reception for Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson at Vanderbilt, stating: "My theory of the racial relations is this: there should be no social intercourse between the races unless we are willing for that to lead to marriage."

At least Tate grew to be ashamed of such statements, and in the 1960s he supported the civil rights movement. ("I wasn't born with virtue in these matters. I have had to acquire it," he told Malcolm Cowley in 1966, trying to block publication of a book that included his letter to Kirstein.) Do the nefarious elements of Agrarianism permanently mar Tate's poems? The answer, I fear, is yes—though not in the way one might expect. There is nothing racist in Tate's poems of the 1930s, and nothing anti-Semitic. Even his Confederate patriotism is surprisingly muted, appearing only in a few poems such as "To the Lacedemonians," where an ancient veteran denounces the New South: "All are born Yankees of the race of men / And this, too, now the country of the damned."

But that equation of modernness with Yankeeness, and of both with spiritual damnation, suggests the way in which Tate's ideology did affect his poetry. It made everything too simple; it gave him a position from which to judge the world, instead of a way of living in the world. Even two of Tate's very best poems, "The Mediterranean" and "Aeneas in Washington," simply re-enact the old story of ancient virtue and modern decline. The former poem beautifully evokes an afternoon picnic by the sea, eating "the very plates Aeneas bore," then contrasts them with the foodstuffs of the New World:

> Westward, westward, till the barbarous brine
> Whelms us to the tired land where tasseling corn,
> Fat beans, grapes sweeter than muscadine
> Rot on the vine: in that land we were born.

The language is inventively classical, but the incoherence of the imagery—would a tired land produce such fat beans? Did crops rot on the vine in America, even during the Depression?—suggests that the poem is struggling to reach its predetermined endpoint: Europe is old and good, America young and bad. Indeed, Tate's dream of the South is really the dream of an American Europe, where the old *gemeinschaft* allegedly lives on, or did until 1865. "The South," he claims in "The Profession of Letters in the South," "clings blindly to forms of European feeling and conduct that were crushed by the French Revolution and that, in England at any rate, are barely memories."

This is historically absurd, of course—for one thing, it conveniently ignores the fact that Europe never practiced racial slavery—and it would be easy to dismiss it as simply the old Walter Scott myth in twentieth-century clothing. (Tate's only novel, *The Fathers*, even features a scene in which Virginia squires hold a jousting tournament.) But in fact the abstractness of Tate's imagination of the South, the rigidity of his historical vision of decline, are authentically modern and authentically modernist. It was Tate's certainty of the loss of the authentic past that led him to invent a radical, exclusivist, and potentially violent myth of the past—violent exactly because it is a myth, because it can only be accepted at the price of an immolation of reason. "How may the Southerner take hold of his Tradition? The answer is, by violence," Tate famously—or infamously—declared in *I'll Take My Stand*. He did not suspect that the first victim of that violence would be his own imagination. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Let Justice Be Done

Whether or not this is the Lord's doing, it is certainly marvelous in our eyes. An African American is the Democratic candidate for president of the United States. *The United States!* If ever there was an occasion for soaring language, this is it; but the man of the hour has somewhat ruined soaring language. One is left mainly with a gulp, and a tear, and an unfamiliar sensation of the sweetness of history. When is history sweet? Truly this is an American benediction. So hyperbole may be forgiven—as when John Hope Franklin declared to *The Washington Post* that Obama's candidacy is "the most radical, far-reaching, significant [undertaking] by any individual or group in our history." Perhaps not, but the historian has earned his hour of ecstasy. The great American counterfactual is now a fact. By the standard of where we are, Obama's victory may not be surprising; but by the standard of where we were, it is shocking. Complacence about this turn of events is a form of forgetting. So for a moment I will not care who Barack Obama is. I will care only what he is. The complexities will soon rush in—as they must, because the office that Obama seeks is too powerful to be regarded only sentimentally, or as a symbol—but for now I will pause to savor the simplicity of a fact. Even more, to savor the color of the man's skin: to enjoy (shame on me!) a fleeting racialist thrill. I do not give daps, but when he dapped her on the stage in St. Paul the other night I was happy for them in their particularity. Let the just times roll!

In a conference room at the Supreme Court there hangs a portrait of John Marshall. It was painted by Rembrandt Peale in 1834, as a pendant to his famous portrait of George Washington that now hangs in the Senate. Both pictures set their heroes within a stonework oval, rather in the manner of contemporary prints of great men. Jupiter appears in the keystone above Washington, and Solon, the giver of laws, above Marshall. Each is inscribed with a large Latin motto. Washington says *Patriae Pater*, or "Father of [His] Country," and Marshall says *Fiat Justitia*, or "Let Justice Be Done." When I first saw the picture years ago, I gasped: this was the bluntest expression of American optimism I had ever seen. For the motto beneath the Chief Justice's wise head is an abridgment of a longer Latin statement. The statement comes in two forms—*fiat justitia pereat mundus*, let justice be done and the world perish (Kant was fond of this version), and *fiat justitia ruat coelum*, let justice be done and the heavens fall (this version was cited by the judge who valiantly commuted the death sentence of one of the Scottsboro boys, as he reflected on the consequences of his decision for his career). Both these formulations are admonitions about the consequences of utopianism—of what we would call, in our dreary vocabulary of efficiency, over-reaching. These mottoes do not call for perfect justice, they warn against it. So do you see it now? When the portraitist in the young republic lopped off the concluding words of the phrase, he reversed its meaning, and thoroughly Americanized it. It is one of the axioms of America that justice can be done without the world perishing or the heavens falling. For this reason, Americans are always a little surprised by failure, by disaster, by war, by tragedy. Such calamities, many of them the result of human actions, do not cohere with the American notion of shadowless possibility. The entire career of idealism in this country, of the oscillations in our politics between enchantment and disenchantment, is limned at the bottom of Peale's painting.

There were some Americans, however, who knew better. They were the ones who had seen the heavens fall: the slaves and their descendants, with the culture of melancholy and its mastery that they created out of the memory of slavery. These Americans understood that there is an outcome even worse than the destruction of the world with justice, and it is the destruction of the world without justice. And they fortified themselves against that outcome with a joyful insistence upon the perpetuation of the world even in the absence of justice. The proximity of joy to injustice, of idealism to suffering, is the most affecting, and the most humbling, of human scenes. There are no greater inner resources than these. And so "yes, we can" is more forceful coming from a black man, even if this black man is not a sufferer. The past seems to attach a special integrity to his confidence, and makes it look like courage. That is why Obama's glibness, his frictionlessness, is so disappointing: he is too sleek for the moral and historical vicissitudes that he claims to exemplify. In this way he is the antithesis of Dr. King, who was always stalked by the recollection of evil, and always wrestling, in his person no less than in his society, with darkness.

Many are depicting Obama's candidacy as a cleansing, an expiation, of America's most odious sin. "It can redeem American history from the specter of race that has plagued us for nearly four hundred years," Manning Marable told the *Post*. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to find myself to the left of Manning Marable, but I wonder. With a black man running for president, and even with a black man as president, how much lighter should the American conscience be? Obama's breakthrough is certainly transformative, as he likes to say, but how much, and what, will it transform? The genuine transformations, in law and in politics and in mores, took place decades ago: Obama is not the seed, he is the flower. In a culture that aspires only to "redemption" or "closure," it would be nice to accomplish both at once, and finally shut the hideous ledger. But if we must not deny the mutability of our arrangements, neither must we exaggerate it. It will take more than the election of Obama, for example, to find a solution to the problem of the inner city—a problem that has defied so many ideas and so many programs that it may defy even hope. White racism will survive an Obama administration, as will black racialism. There will be lobbying in Washington. I foresee a wave of quasi-eschatological disappointment in the man, whose shape-shifting has already begun; but never mind. I will cross that news cycle when I come to it. For now, I prefer only to behold the candidate and be glad. The question is no longer whether a black man can run for president. The question now is whether to vote for him.

Leon Wieseltier

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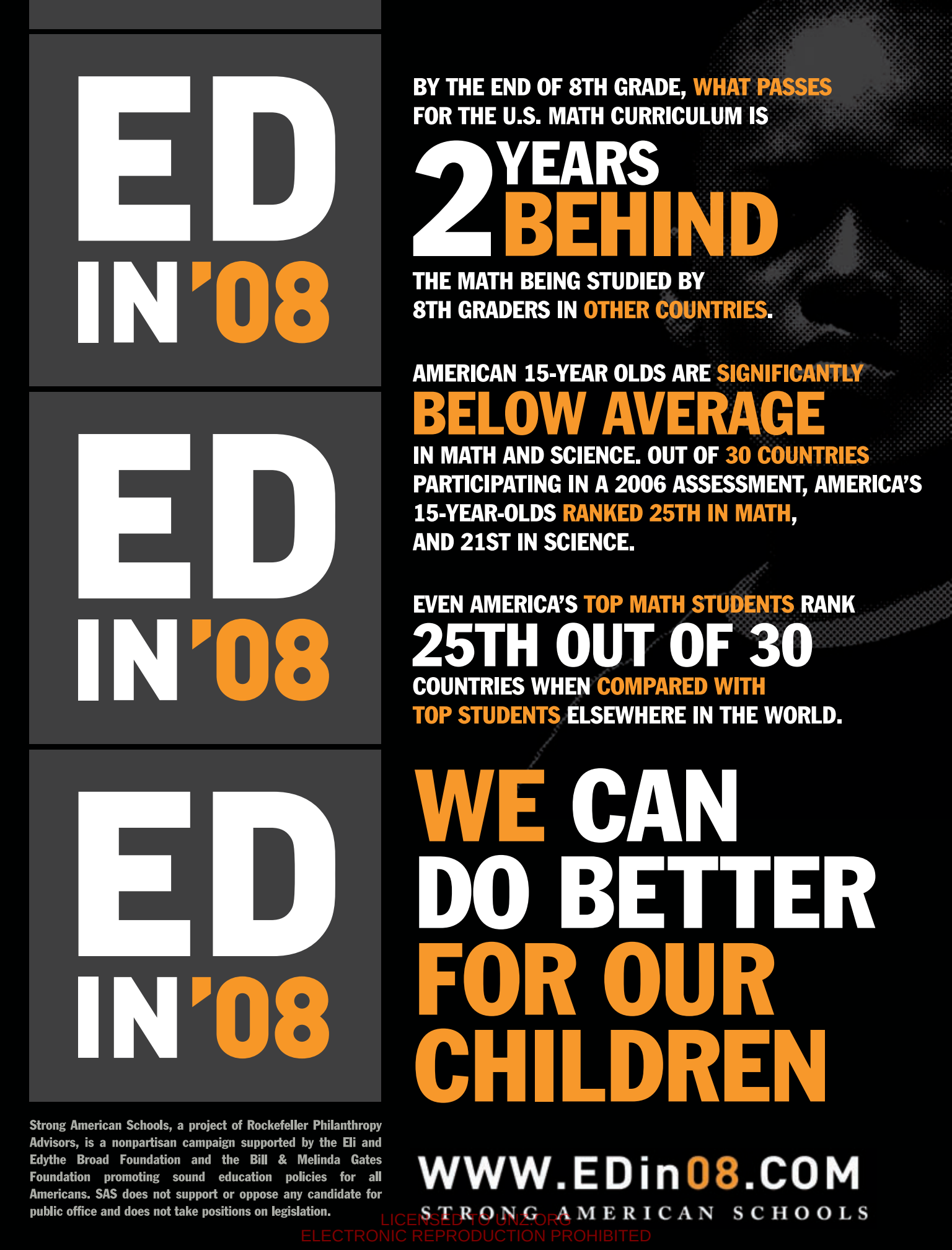
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